Polyhedron

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OCTOBER

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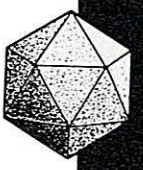

Notes from HQ

The Undiscovered Country...

Imagine a living campaign for the role-player. What elements would such a campaign possess? It would emphasize character over combat, talent over treasure. It would be mysterious, heroic, Romantic. It would make players think.

Introducing the LIVING DEATH™, our newest living tournament setting. The LIVING DEATH takes you into the world of the popular *Masque of the Red Death* setting. Like other living campaigns, you bring your own character to conventions. That is where the similarities end. While LIVING CITY™ is heroic high fantasy and LIVING JUNGLE™ is primitive heroic adventure, LIVING DEATH is gothic mystery and Romance. Horror? Yes, there will be some of that, too. But LIVING DEATH is far more than a horror campaign. The elements of suspense, mystery, and the unknown are its lynchpins. Other living campaigns have limited geographic settings, but LIVING DEATH spans the entirety of Gothic Earth. Your character, as a member of a secret society, investigates unusual and supernatural occurrences across the globe, exploring pyramids in Egypt, tracing villains in the Old West, or fighting evil aboard the Orient Express.

The articles in this issue introduce you to this setting, help you create a character, and suggest additional reading to get you in the mood. At the upcoming WINTER FANTASY™ show in February, you will have the opportunity to try the first two events in this campaign, *Skinners* by Lester Smith, and *Casting Call* by David Eckelberry and John Bunnell. *Le mystère* beckons, inviting you inside. Dare you enter?

Scott's State of the Network Address

The summer has come and gone, and we've survived! Since it's the first chance I've had to breathe in a while, I'll catch you up on what's happening at HQ.

First, we're doing things a bit differently. You might have seen that Duane has published new authors' and artists' guidelines for the Newszine. Robert has revised tournament guidelines, and is working hard to make the tournament program even better. If you're an author and are interested in the new guidelines, send a SASE for the new style sheet that will make your tournament even easier to sanction. I've jumped off of the deep end, and plunged into the task of making the living campaigns more sustainable. Expect to see new authors' and judges' guidelines for LC tournaments soon, and you can expect to see an LC product for sale early in 1996. Even Judy is doing new stuff. More to follow on that.

Second, we're talking with Network members. For example, I've heard a good deal of valid criticism about the updated LC character guides. One of the most valid is that, currently, demihumans are not allowed to take certain racial specialty priesthoods. As a result, the *Monster Mythology* tome is reinstated as an official sourcebook for the purpose of those specialty priesthoods only, effective immediately (see page 7). We are staying with most of the changes, but this is one we've rethought. Living campaign, living rules. When possible, we'll do our best to make the changes gradually. Also, we conducted a survey this summer to give us some preliminary ideas about what the membership wanted to see in the Newszine. Expect to see a general membership survey in an upcoming issue.

Third, we're trying to involve members. The manager of our LC database, Don Weatherbee, has found that the effort involved in maintaining the database exceeds even his boundless energies. A number of you have offered your assistance, and we will decide soon how to proceed. If you've sent in an offer, you should have received some information from us. If you haven't, let us know.

Finally and most importantly, it looks like some really good things are going to happen up here. I've already mentioned the LC5 product. We're going to be giving the Newszine a fresh look. We'll soon be working more closely with the regional directors to assist first-time conventions. We're looking at updating the scoring system, to make it a little less competitive.

All of this (and more) is a result of asking you what you thought (and think) about the Network and its future. Keep talking; we're listening.

Tournament News

The Network is accepting submissions of tournaments to fill out the GEN CON® Game Fair 1996 schedule. We would like to see the members produce many of the Game Fair tournaments. We need the following: one-round AD&D® modules (for the Special, Grand Masters, Paragon, and Benefit), RAVENLOFT, LIVING CITY, LIVING JUNGLE , LIVING DEATH, *Amber*, *Virtual Seattle*, *Star Wars*, *Paranoia*, and *Call of Cthulhu* events. It's kind of cool to have one of your adventures run at the Game Fair, where hundreds of people will play it. Submission deadline for completed tournaments is December 31, 1995. Final decisions will be made in January, and we will find homes for all good tournaments not used for the Game Fair.

We ask that you send an outline of your proposed tournament to Network HQ before you write it. This is especially true if you are new to tournament writing or you are planning to write a LC, LJ, or LD event. We can give you some early guidance this way, and that may save you time.

LIVING CITY News

The LC campaign is changing, and we want to keep you as up-to-date as possible. We also invite your suggestions for improving the campaign, but we must receive them either by e-mail or by letter. The LIVING CITY belongs to the Network, and we will consider and respond to all suggestions made.

- Starting January 1st, 1996, all LC tournament tables will be limited to six players, just like LJ events. We believe that players and judges alike will enjoy LC events more if there are only six players at a table.
- On August 8th, 1996, the beginning of the Game Fair, all players must present

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GEN CON 1995 Game Fair

It was pointed out to us that in the credits for the *Timemaster* event, "White Star Crossing," we listed the author as Don Bingle. The authors were Don Bingle AND Mary Zalapi. We apologize for this oversight.

Publisher
TSR, Inc.

Network Coordinator
Scott Douglas

Editor
Duane Maxwell

Contributing Editors
Dave Gross

Graphic Director
Larry Smith

Production Staff
Sue Billings
Dave Conant
Terry Craig
Shirley Surek

Subscriptions
Judy Mueller

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Issue #112

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Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!
—W.B. Yeats "Under Ben Bulben"

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About the Cover

This month's cover, and the interior illustrations for the LIVING DEATH articles, were rendered by Stephen F. Schwartz.

Forgotten Deities

Selvetarm

by Eric Boyd

Power:	Demi-
Plane:	Abyss
AoC:	Champion of Lolth, Patron of Drow Warriors
Align:	CE
WAL:	CE (drow)
Symbol:	Crossed sword and mace overlaid with spider image
Sex:	Male

Selvetarm is a male spider deity worshipped by a few drow in the northern and western reaches of the Underdark. He is typically depicted as a large black spider, sometimes with the head of a drow male and often wielding a sword and mace in his front legs. He is seen as the embodiment of unequaled fighting prowess. Selvatarm is revered only in the drow city of Eryndlyn and worshipped only by a small band of exiles based far beneath the surface city of Waterdeep.

The city of Eryndlyn, located in hidden caves beneath the High Moor, is characterized by barely contained hostilities between the worshippers of Lloth, Ghaunadaur and Vhaeraun. During the Time of Troubles, the avatar of Selvetarm rampaged through the drow city, attacking strongholds of the followers of Ghaunadaur and Vhaeraun. Priestesses of Lolth hailed the monster as the sword-arm of Lloth, sent to demonstrate her absolute rule. The avatar's material form was finally driven into the wild Underdark by an alliance between the victimized cults, but not without great losses. It is unknown whether Selvetarm's avatar still remains in the Underdark or if he has returned to the Abyss.

As a result of Selvetarm's rampage through Eryndlyn, droves of drow worshippers in that strife-torn city have allied themselves with the priestesses of Lloth. A new military order called the Selvetargtlin ("Warriors of Selvetarm") has shifted the balance of power in the cult of Lloth's favor and consequently driven the worshippers of Ghaundaur and Vhaeraun into an uneasy alliance. It is uncertain how this will affect the long term balance of power in the city.

A few drow in Eryndlyn began to worship Selvetarm in his own right. This displeased the priestesses of Lloth immensely, and the blasphemers were quickly driven from the city and into exile. These drow are believed to have recently settled in the Underdark beneath Waterdeep in the hopes of building their own city. Patrols of Selvetarm's faithful have been encountered exploring the dungeons of Undermountain and searching for new magic with which to defend the exiled cult.

Drow scholars theorize that Selvetarm was a tanar'ri who, prior to the Time of Troubles, dwelt in exile in the Spider Swamp in western Calimshan. A spider entity known as Zanassu was rumored to have a significant influence over the city of Volothamp in addition to being worshipped by some of the drow of the Forest of Mir. Some drow scholars claim that during the Avatar crisis, Lloth slew Zanassu and assumed his power in her new aspect as Selvetarm. Other scholars speculate that following the Time of Troubles Lolth elevated a Tanar-ri lord, formerly known as Zanassu, to the status of her "champion" in an attempt to lure male worshippers away from the rival cults of Ghaundaur and Vhaeraun.

Selvetarm's Priests

It is only within the ranks of these exiles beneath Waterdeep that priests of Selvetarm exist. All such clergy are specialty priests, and they are currently receiving spells. It is uncertain whether an independent entity known as Selvetarm/Zanassu is granting their powers or if Lloth herself is answering their prayers. It is also possible Vhaeraun is playing Lolth's own game against her and trying to weaken the sect designed to weaken his support in Eryndlyn by fostering the exiles' independence. Priest of Selvetarm are expected to hone their fighting skills constantly, and train their fellow drow as warriors. They must never give or receive quarter, and to die in favor with their dark deity they must die in battle against overwhelming odds.

AB Str 13*; **AL** LE; **WP** any; **AR** any; **RA** magical drow boots, cloak, chain mail with symbol on breast; **SP** All, Animal, Chaos, Combat, Healing*, War*; **SPL** nil; **PW** 1) immune to spider poison, 1) able to use magical items normally usable only by warriors, 1) able to specialize in multiple style specializations (see PHBR1) 1) incite berserker rage 3/day (see PHBR3) in him or herself; **TU** nil; **QS** warband quest. ❑

The Ravens Bluff Trumpeter

High Honors Awarded at Adventurer Games

Several tendays ago, Lady Lauren DeVillars hosted a Founders Day Celebration in Ravens Bluff. The highlight of this event was the Adventurer Games, a series of competitions similar to the Champion's Games. Lord Mayor O'Kane himself awarded high honors to the winners.

Grand Champion (winner): Sir Drakkar Von Damm, who received an ornamented sword from far-off Kara-Tur.
City Champion (second place): Lorien Keltree Darkarrow.
Champion (third place): Lady Alexis Vandree.
Fencing: Lorien Keltree Darkarrow *(played by Dan Donnelly)*
Jousting: Sir Drakkar Von Damm *(played by Capt. Dave Kelly)*
Heavy Sword: Sir Drakkar Von Damm
Spear Throw: Skarr *(played by Mike Painter)*
Archery: Lady Alexis Vandree *(played by Ed Gibson)*
Religious Debate: Amlar the Ugly *(played by Kelley Foote)*
Spellcraft: Sasis Von Tyrendunn *(played by David Nadolny)*
Poetry: Katrina *(played by Ron Roberts)*
Cooking: Marci Pyrogenous *(played by Paul Gosselin)*
Dagger/Dart Throw: Rory Slowfooti *(played by Carl Maus)*
Spath's Lockpicking contest: Rory Slowfooti.
Elminster's Test of the Art: Invar *(played by Malcolm Wood)*

Lady Lauren and Lord Mayor O'Kane wish to thank all the adventurers who came and participated in the Games.

Guild War Heats Up in Crow's End

In the wake of Anton Paere's murder, the thief gangs of Ravens Bluff have begun fighting to determine who will control the city's crime. Sources close to the *Trumpeter* have discovered that Paere, under the cover of his "Lost Property" business, actually ran the thief guilds, or had a part in most of their illegal activities. One of our reporters talked to several "unofficial" sources on the matter. "We thought for years that he was up to something," said one Watch officer. "We could never prove anything, but most folks are not generous without some ulterior motive. Take it from someone who's seen the dark side of this city."

In the past tenday, four men have been found murdered in Crow's End All were suspected leaders or lieutenants of some of the thief gangs. The first, Markas Bruno, suspected leader of the Black Talon gang, was found with a single dagger in his back. The second body was that of Caisk Kelpugh, the leader of the Blind Crows, likely the victim of a Black Talon reprisal. The two other victims were both believed to be lieutenants in the Four Ravens Guild of Thieves.

In addition, our sources claim that incidents of violent crime have multiplied in Crow's End. Most of the victims have been thieves, fences, or others who make a living from stolen property, but honest men and women have perished in these attacks too.

Businesses in Crow's End have begun hiring guards to protect their properties. Fewer people are seen outside after dark, and an air of fear has settled over the neighborhoods.

Where will all this end? The City Watch assures us that they have brought on extra officers, but the streets of Crow's End are just as badly patrolled as ever. Citizens are urged to stay inside at night until this war blows over.

Lord Blacktree and Lady Moorland to Wed

The biggest social event of the season will take place in a few months, when Lord Charles Blacktree IV and Lady Katherine Marie Moorland wed. The big announcement was made at Blacktree's latest party, which was attended by the city's elite. Sources close to Lady Katherine say that though she despised Blacktree in earlier years, the changes wrought in him during his two years away from the city have made him a new man, one whom Katherine finds very appealing. As for Blacktree, people in his household believe that love has overtaken the new Field General.

Holiday Returns

Howard Holiday, our own Deputy Mayor, returned to the city after a two-year absence. He took back his mantle of office at the conclusion of the Founders Day festivities. The city expresses its gratitude to Invar, who served so admirably. It is rumored that Invar will be made a knight, but no details have been released.

Mercenaries Wanted

Good pay offered for combat-intensive work in the south. Leave message at the Sign of the Unicorn Inn. You will be contacted.

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

Scott and Kevin Review Some of This Summer's Conventions

There were a lot of cool conventions this summer. Some of the staff from Network HQ got to attend some of them, so we thought we would share some of our experiences from our whirlwind gaming tour of the United States.

Origins '95: July 13-16
Philadelphia Convention Center,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Nice spacious facility. The Andon folks did a good job with registration lines and game registration. Over 7,000 gamers moved quickly through the lines with nary a hitch. Unfortunately, some of the games were located in a noisy dealer's room, which made them difficult to run.

The most impressive event? The *Magic: the Gathering* US National Championships. Former Duelist Convocation director Steve Bishop and staff did a superb job of pairing up over 1500 players in amazingly short periods of time. The Maze of Games, run by Live/Wire and longtime Network members Mike Selinker, Gwendolyn Kestrel, Pete Curtin, Teeuwyn Woodruff, John Vacarro, Jim Wade, Steve Hovland, Tim Beach, and a host of others, was also a huge success and a lot of fun as well.

Special kudos to tournament coordinator Mark Jindra, who worked nonstop to make sure that everybody got into a game, found a judge, and had a great time.

Dragon*Con/NASFiC: July 13-16
Atlanta Hilton and the Westin Peach Tree Plaza Hotel
Atlanta, Georgia

This year's Dragon*Con was coupled with the National Science Fiction Convention, and attracted thousands of role-playing, sci-fi, and card game enthusiasts from around the world. Though the dealer hall was small, the variety of vendors ensured that you could find almost any sort of game product you were looking for. A new feature this year was an exhibitor's area for game companies to demonstrate their newest products. It was here that TSR launched their new DRAGON DICE™ game, which was a big hit at the con. As they have in the past, the organizers of Dragon*Con brought numerous celebrities, including Peter David, Anthony Daniels, and Christopher Lambert.

In a hotel separate from the dealer hall, there were RPGA® Network events, collectible card games, and other role-playing and board gaming events. Mark Liberman and his staff ran a very smooth operation in the gaming hall. The highlight of the Network effort was the LIVING CITY™ Interactive "Selûne's Summer Festival," created by Dan Donnelly. This epic event ran from noon to midnight on Saturday. Hats off to Dan and all the volunteers who made the LC Interactive such a great time.

LIVING CITY™ Rulebook

As of October 15, 1995, the *Monster Mythology* tome is allowed as a reference in the LIVING CITY campaign for specifying specialty priest abilities granted by demi-human deities. Such specialty priests must be of the race of the deity (half-elves are elves), and must adhere to the strictures and requirements listed in this tome. No shamans are allowed. Only the following deities grant powers to demi-human specialty priests in the LC campaign:

- *Elves:* Corellan Larethian, Sehanine Moonbow, Aerdrie Faenya, Erevan Ilesere, Fenmarel Mestarine, Hanali Celanil, Labelas Enoreth, Solonor Thelandira
- *Dwarves:* Moradin, Berronar Truesilver, Clangeddin Silverbeard, Dugmaren Brightmantle, Dumathoin, Muamman Duathal, Verdegain
- *Gnomes:* Garl Glittergold, Baervan Wildwanderer, Baravar Cloakshadow, Flandal Steelskin, Gaerdal Ironhand, Nebelun, Segojan Earthcaller
- *Halflings:* Yondalla, Arvoreen, Brandobaris, Cyrollalee, Sheela Peryroyl, Urgolan

DexCon 4: July 20-23
Radisson Hotel, Somerset, New Jersey

This is a fun con. Double Exposure coordinator Vinnie Salzillo and his crew put on a great show. This is the convention, by the way, where convention staff actually brings food to the gamemasters at their tables! It's no exaggeration to say that DexCon really caters to its judges.

If you like puzzles, this is your convention. Vinnie offered $2500 to anyone who could figure out his badge puzzle, and a $500 shopping spree to anyone who could figure out the puzzle contained in the preregistration materials.

Most impressive event? Network tournament coordination by Don Weatherbee, Sureka Chate, and many others. Event marshaling was quick, smooth, and painless; the event signs (by Don) were great. The *Star Wars* Capital Ships Battle, sponsored by Sci-Fi Supply and West End Games, was the coolest looking miniatures event ever. Live Action Role-Play was everywhere and extremely well organized.

My favorite? The First Annual DexCon Invitational Underwater DRAGON DICE Championships, conducted by (blush) yours truly. Amazing what transpires when you mix a swimming pool, a cool new game, good company, and blueberry beverages. There will be a Second Annual, by the way (snorkel and swim fins are optional.)

DarkCon II: July 28-30
Day's Inn Motel,
Norman, Oklahoma

If you wanted to start a new game club, you might want to start a club like Darkmoore. This group of guys and gals who used to get together over at Nathan Carpenter's house every other week has grown to over 250 members in fewer than four years. So it says a lot that

they've decided to put their resources behind a gaming convention. First year, almost 300 attended. This second year, over 400. These folks must be doing something right.

Most impressive event? Darkmoore's 5th Annual PC of the Year Competition. In this unusual AD&D® tournament, players develop a character using set amounts of experience points for levels and magic items, and then play through an original three-round scenario intended to challenge players' ingenuity. Jason Lewis, from Stillwater, Oklahoma, won the epic event, which regularly draws competitors from five states.

Another standout was the particularly well-run LARP events, one of which drew over 100 players, some until dawn. I must say (with Oklahoma pride) that this convention is growing to be one of my favorites. To convention chair Jonathan Keepers and his staff, congratulations on a job well done.

GEN CON® Game Fair: August 10–13
MECCA, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Over 27,000 attended this 28th annual event, an event which exceeded all our expectations for success. Convention coordinator Ken Whitman and convention manager Tom McLaughlin both did an outstanding job in arranging the best programming possible, and making sure that all involved got their money's worth.

The only significant complaints I heard from attendees were about obtaining downtown Milwaukee housing. As the convention grows, it seems that housing becomes more of a problem.

Most impressive event? So many things went well, but the LC Interactive, written by Dan Donnelly and run by a host of willing henchmen and henchwomen, was immensely successful. The LC auction at the interactive, hosted by auctioneer Nicky Rea, raised over $2700 by itself.

Benefit events were spectacularly fruitful for our chosen charities, the OKADA Hearing Ear Dog program and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Between the interactive, the charity auction at the Wednesday night membership meeting, benefit games play, and a sizable contribution by the Sci-Fi Saturday crew, Network charities realized over $17,000 dollars in donations.

The Network Clubs tournament "The Fourth Wish" was the most popular team tournament in recent Game Fair history; its team scoring system may in fact become the model for Network team tournaments from this point on. The PM Players and the Knights of the Empire clubs cooperated in hosting this unique event, which was most convincingly won by the Death Warmed Over club, which finished both first and second.

As always, unselfish Network members made the whole event possible, by donating their time, their effort, and their limitless creative energy. I've been one of those volunteers in the past, and it's more than a little awe-inspiring to see the whole thing come together. Robert, Judy, Duane, Kevin, and I put in a lot of time to plan and organize the Arena activities, but without the support of marshals, coordinators, HQ staff, judges, and other willing volunteers, none of the events would be successful.

So many other people deserve to be mentioned, but space prohibits me listing all the names. But I'll mention a few: Tom Fortunato, Alex Glocks, Dan Kaehne, Steven Melka, Les Arends, Jim Weddig, and Mike Stark for their yeoman service manning the front desk in the Arena and Labyrinth; John Vaccaro, Carl Longley, and Doug Behringer for planning and organizing marshals; Bob and Sue Farnsworth, Ed Peterson, Randall Lemon, Steve Hardinger, Wes Nicholson, Mary Zalapi, Bill Gilsdorf, Dewey Frech, Tom Prusa, Tom Hammerschmidt, Faegan Whitewolf, Vic Polites, and so many others who coordinated events; Carol Clarkson, David Samuels, Rocco Pisto, Gail Reese, Liz Black, Jeffery Levi, Kevin and Carrie Rau, Steve and Billie Glimpse, Mary Schmitt, Carol Robinson, Susan Lee, Dave Santana, Chris McGuigan, Norm Ritchie, Bart Scott, and lots of other volunteers at HQ; Barb Petilli, Sean Flaherty, George Coursey, Dennis Everett, John Richardson, John Harnes, Larry Douglas, Jackie Cassada, George Aber, Mike Capps, Wayne Melnick, Sue Adams, Andy Patterson, Mark Liberman, John Bunnell, Beth Bostic, Art Lobdell, Brian Burr, Gwen Kestrel, Erica Woollums, and scores of LC Interactive volunteers.

Special Network kudos should be bestowed on many folks, but especially on three individuals. First, Cheryl Frech, who does an outstanding job running RPGA Network HQ each year at the Game Fair. She organized coordinators, recruited HQ staff, and made sure everything got done. Second, Kevin Melka refused to let any of the new guys at HQ drop the ball. He edited most of the tournaments for the convention, organized all of the equipment requests, and sent me regular, friendly memos reminding me of details I had forgotten to address. Third, Don Weatherbee almost single-handedly brought information processing at Game Fair Network HQ into the 90's by convincing me to requisition a computer and a copier, and then proceeding to demonstrate just how much assistance those machines could render.

All in all, an excellent event! By the way, make plans to attend next year's GEN CON Game Fair at the MECCA, August 8-11, 1996.

A fun, if exhausting, summer convention season. I might take a few more weekends off, but I can hardly wait for next summer!

❑

continued from page 2
certificates for ALL magic items that their characters possess. Even starting magic items will have certificates (we are still working on how to best implement that). Magic items without certificates will run out of magic at 6:00:00 CDT on August 8th, 1996. For those of you who have magic items without certificates, here are some suggestions for what to do with them:

a. Use them up. Think of this as a chance to do spring cleaning on your magic item list.

b. Trade them. Beginning in January, Robert will run Magic Item Trade Bazaars at conventions that he attends. At these shops, you can trade magic items you have for other (and possibly better) magic items, but it is trading only — no cash transactions. The Trade-up shops will run at Constitution (Jan, VA), WINTER FANTASY™ Convention (Feb, WI), Genghis Con (Feb, CO), ConnCon (Mar, CT), and Con-Troll (Apr, TX).

c. Give them away. They will still expire, but they may get more use first, and you will look great.

d. If you have a permanent item or two that you cherish, and it does not have a certificate, send your character to Network HQ as soon as possible, along with a cover letter stating what you want. We will make certificates for you. Certificates will be made for *permanent items only*, and the limit is two (2) per PC.

Until next time, go carefully.

Cast A Cold Eye...

An Introduction to the LIVING DEATH™ Campaign Setting

Amos looked back at the burning town. He gripped his rifle with a lingering desperation. Nothing could walk out of that inferno. Nothing, he prayed.

Past the withered black house frames silhouetted in the flames, the rising sun ignited the horizon. It looked like the fire that started last night had expanded to consume the world.

Better that, though Amos, than to let those things loose in the world. He would never have believed such creatures could exist had someone told him the tale. But he had seen it with his own eyes. And with his own eyes he saw Monique burning with the rest of the monsters. He prayed that her life was all she had lost in the pyre he started.

First came the LIVING CITY™. Network members could bring their own characters to the table and come away with experience, treasure, and—most importantly—the knowledge that they could return with those same characters to play again in the living campaign. The simple idea of combining the best elements of tournament and campaign play caught on quickly, and within a few years thousands of player characters had become a part of the LIVING CITY. In quick succession, Virtual Seattle (for *Shadowrun*), the LIVING JUNGLE™, and Threads of Legend (*Earthdawn*) all joined the LIVING CITY as popular "living" settings. You can enjoy all these Living settings, though each is independent of the others. Characters created for one setting may not be played in the others. Now lovers of gothic mystery adventure have their own campaign: the LIVING DEATH.

Getting Started

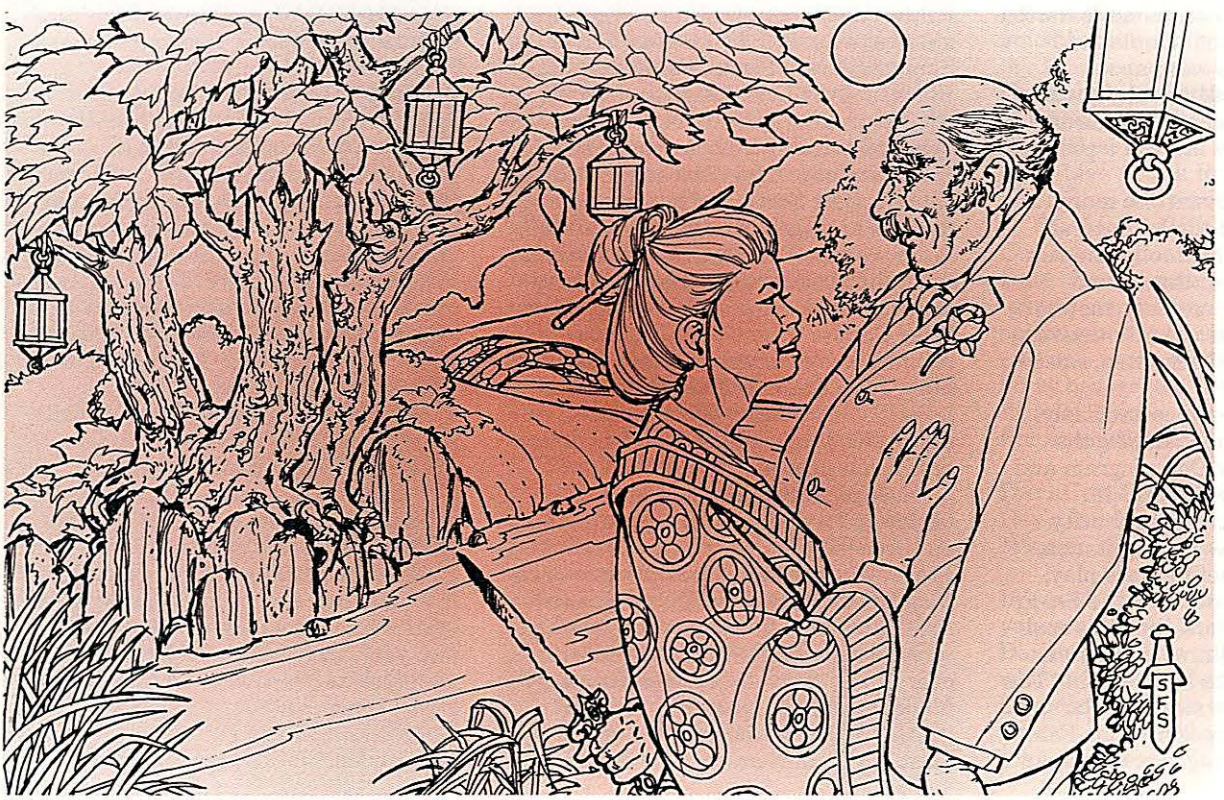
Nicolette walked among the gurgling flasks and crackling wires of her father's laboratory. Clutching the key tightly against her chest, like a talisman to ward against her father's premature return, she stepped carefully around a table littered with papers.

She heard a door close elsewhere in the house and hesitated, holding her breath. A servant, nothing more. Surely her father would not have returned from Paris so soon.

These sudden trips, the late hours, and the deliveries late at night...her father seemed so obsessed lately. Last night, some men delivered a large, heavy box, and she was sure she had heard an animal growling from beneath the rain tarp covering it. She couldn't imagine her father experimenting on live animals, but she was certain of what she had heard. Steeling herself, she stepped cautiously around a wall into a part of her father's laboratory that she had never seen from its door.

There, in a large cage covered by a dirty canvas, she heard a faint clink of chains. A sound like a leopard's cough came from within the cage. Nicolette hesitated, then stepped forward. She reached out a trembling hand to move the canvas and gasped.

It wasn't an animal.



To create a character for the setting, you need this issue of the Newszine and must be familiar with the core AD&D® game rules. You also need to read "A Guide to Gothic Earth" from the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set. If you don't own the boxed set, you can still play in the campaign as long as you can borrow "A Guide to Gothic Earth" long enough to create a character.

To write or judge a LIVING DEATH tournament, however, you should own copies of the AD&D core rules, the revised RAVENLOFT® boxed

set, and the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set. Especially for writers of the LIVING DEATH setting, the upcoming *Gothic Earth Gazetteer* is strongly recommended as a very useful resource. Other non-gaming resources for writers are listed elsewhere in this issue.

The Campaign Setting

The invitation was not signed, but Harrison knew it had to do with the killer. Someone had seen him in the alley, struggling with the muffled figure above the dead prostitute. That someone had followed him to his home, and now he wanted . . . what? Blackmail? Harrison couldn't imagine that a common criminal would summon him to the Blackfriar's Club.

Harrison surrendered his hat and gloves to the butler, but he held onto the cloak. Carrying it over his arm was a sort of comfort as he walked past the familiar, staid faces of the other club members. Some of them looked up from their newspapers with a nod; others continued their quiet conversations over sherry and cigars.

"Dr. Harrison," said the steward. "Your guest awaits you in the smoking room. With a nod, Harrison followed the servant.

The LIVING DEATH is set in the world of Gothic Earth from the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set. If you've already read "A Guide to Gothic Earth" from that campaign setting, then you know most of what you need to know about the LIVING DEATH. If not, then here is a brief summary.

Gothic Earth is a world very much like our own during the last decade of the 19th Century . . . during the day. In the shadows, and under the dark night skies, Gothic Earth takes a sinister turn. Evil lives not only in the minds and hearts of wicked people, but also more tangibly in the many forms of the minions of the Red Death. Fortunately for their sanity, almost all the inhabitants of Gothic Earth know nothing about the true evil in the world. Most would react to tales of ghosts or alien horrors with the same skepticism and mockery as would the inhabitants of our own Victorian age.

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Egyptians of Gothic Earth unwittingly unleashed a terrible force into the world. Called the Red Death by those who know enough—or perhaps too much—of forbidden lore, it is the center of all supernatural evil in the world. While the Red Death almost never takes a direct hand in the workings of Gothic Earth, the real threat to humanity lies in its many minions and slaves—some of them normal humans, others abominations beyond imagination.

The heroes of Gothic Earth are those rare persons who have experienced some terrible encounter with the minions of the Red Death and have not only survived, but also sworn to oppose the evil at every chance. Many of them are membes of qabals, secret organizations with various agendas, some of them virtuous and some of them wicked. All player character heroes in the LIVING DEATH begin the game with a contact in a qabal. Just which qabal that may be will remain a mystery, for now. Unlike previous living settings, players, judges, and even the tournament writers won't know all of the mysteries of the campaign at first. Through tournament play and occasional articles here, the secrets of the LIVING DEATH setting will unfold slowly over the next several years.

A Horror Campaign?

The LIVING DEATH is not a horror campaign. Or rather, it is not just a horror campaign. The basic premise for Gothic Earth is that the world suffers from a powerful manifestation of evil, and that many of its minions are supernatural beings.

Horror games are great fun, but sustaining a campaign in which the heroes always know they will face some supernatural monster is difficult at best. When you're playing in a RAVENLOFT campaign, it isn't much of a surprise to learn that the suspect in a series of bestial murders is a werewolf. So the LIVING DEATH is not just a horror setting, it is also a campaign of mystery and adventure, intrigue and romance.

All heroes in the campaign have one thing in common: They have each witnessed some manifestation of the Red Death and have chosen to oppose it. When the mysterious contacts who bring them together summon those brave souls, it is always to investigate possible activity by the minions of the Red Death. But not all villains are vampires or werewolves, and few are psychopathic killers whose only motive is wickedness. Some are avaricious, others lust for political power, and a few are just plain off their nut. Most wouldn't believe in vampires if you introduced them to one.

Thus, you may find your hero traveling the Amazon in search of a lost anthropologist, or he may become embroiled in a dangerous murder investigation. The heroes of Gothic Earth find themselves fighting greedy archeologists, ambitious dukes, ruthless gunslingers, and—yes—even mad scientists. Sometimes the heroes will investigate a report of Red Death activity only to learn that they have only a bank theft to solve. Or they may learn that the frightful Creature of Lake Eerie is actually a fantastic submersible being tested by a scientific genius who plans to threaten and blackmail shipping lanes. Of course, there's also the chance that the heroes will find a powerful minion of the Red Death waiting for a few careless agents of good.

The Heroes of Gothic Earth

They stood before the gangplank, three strangers. Nicolette wore the white rose in her hair, Harrison upon his breast. Amos held it in his gloved hand only so long as it took for the others to approach him. Then he dropped it into Boston harbor and watched as the choppy waves tossed it roughly about before devouring the fragile blossom.

"The telegram indicated we would find instructions aboard," prompted Harrison. While Amos' duster and Nicollete's coat snapped like flags in the wind, the Englishman's cloak floated like a deep-sea plant on dark currents.

"Yup," agreed Amos. His rifle case rested comfortably in the crook of one arm, its soft buckskin doing nothing to conceal the weapon inside. The boarding passengers turned to stare at his strong brown face.

"What is it we are looking for?" asked Nicolette. Her French accent seemed almost as alien to this city as Amos' western garb. "Were either of you told?"

Both men shook their heads. Amos pinched the front of his hat and settled it more firmly on his head.

"I reckon it's a secret."

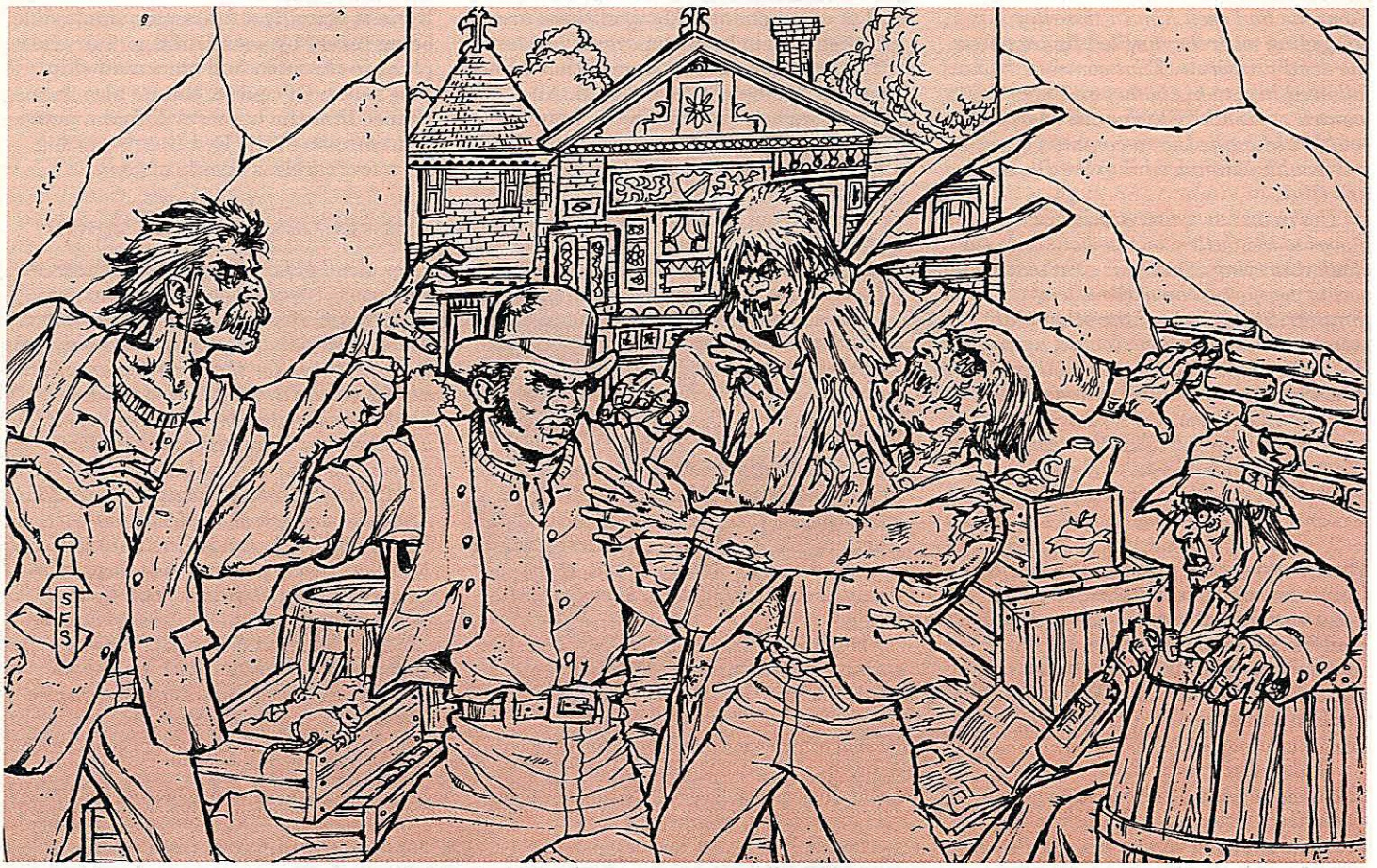
For the basic rules on creating a LIVING DEATH hero, see the character creation guidelines elsewhere in this issue. Those rules are kept purposefully short, but don't stop developing your hero simply because you've filled in all the little boxes on your character sheet. Give your character an interesting background and personality, including a personal goal.

The player characters in this campaign, the heroes, are among the few persons in the world who know what

terrible evil the world faces. Each has lost his or her innocence in witnessing the effects of the Red Death, and each has received a cryptic message from a stranger—a message inviting the hero to take an active role in fighting the Red Death and all its minions. That stranger could be someone met at a social club, through employment at a security agency, at university, or even just a complete stranger who somehow learned about the hero's encounter with the Red Death.

Beyond these shared traits, the heroes of Gothic Earth come from all backgrounds. At first, players can choose their heroes to be cavalrymen, scouts, detectives, journalists, physicians, scholars, charlatan's, mediums, or any of the other character kits available in "A Guide to Gothic Earth." Other kits will become available as the campaign continues, and players can always opt to play a character without a kit, choosing a soldier, tradesman, mystic, or adept class and simply using nonweapon proficiencies to reflect a profession not listed in the rules. The important thing is that, regardless of the character's background and profession, he or she should be able to slip away from "real life" and join other heroes half-way across the globe in an investigation.

Some obvious choices for such characters are archeologists (scholars), private detectives, journalists (perhaps for the National Geographic Society), wealthy dilletantes (dandies), and mercenary soldiers (cavalrymen or simply soldiers without a kit). But players needn't be limited to such roles; use your imagination, inventing an original character, or choosing a model from history or literature. (Avoid the obvious ones, like Sherlock Holmes, or you're likely to bump into another hero who seems strangely similar to yours!)



Campaign Continuity

Another difference between previous living settings and the LIVING DEATH is that your hero's actions can have a very significant impact on the history of the campaign. For instance, imagine that you play an adventure in which the president of the United States is kidnapped and replaced by an evil doppelganger. After the adventure, your DM notes whether your group succeeded in rescuing the president. When the results from all the tables for the convention at which the tournament premieres are tallied, the president's fate depends on whether more than half of the groups succeeded. If more failed, then for the rest of the LIVING DEATH campaign, the president is actually the doppleganger and future adventures will reflect that change.

LIVING DEATH authors are encouraged to include at least one event of campaign significance in each adventure. These events may not be linked to true historical events, but they will be important to the campaign history. Sometimes the results of these events won't be apparent to players until they participate in a later adventures and encounter a villain they thought had died or discover the true identity of one of their contacts. ❑

...On Life, On Death. ...

Recommended Reading for the LIVING DEATH™ Campaign

by John D. Rateliff, Ph.D.

Gothic Earth is a wonderful campaign setting, full of endless potential. However, DMs who wish to create their own scenarios for the game or write tournaments for the RPGA® Network's LIVING DEATH campaign may be hampered by their lack of familiarity with the milieu. The following are classic ghost stories and other horror, most written and published in the period from 1890 to 1914; a few kindred spirits from earlier (Poe) or later (Smith) decades have been included as well. These stories are full of characters, settings, and especially scenarios that can easily be adapted into adventures for LIVING DEATH. Better yet, much of this material will be unfamiliar to most players and hence capable of providing some nasty surprises to their characters. The list is a highly selective one, and I have added comments to help you judge whether or not a given author is likely to be to your taste, as well as some notes on where to find the stories. Finally, I've added a few modern works that are either set in our period or can easily be adapted to it without losing their distinctive flavor. Other suggestions are welcome.

William Hope Hodgson
Carnacki the Ghost Finder (1914), esp. "The Gateway of the Monster" and "The Whistling Room."

See also the novel *The Ghost Pirates* (1909) & the short stories "The Voice in the Fog" and "The Derelict"

One of the greats. The Carnacki stories detail the exploits of a ghost-hunter who investigates hauntings by sleeping in supposedly haunted rooms, staying the night in a haunted chapel, &c. About half his adventures deal with fakes and half with the real thing. The quintessential Gothic Earth author for his creation of a creepy mood and innovative attitude toward the occult (among Carnacki's paraphernalia is an electric pentagram). A sailor, photographer, and nemesis of Houdini, Hodgson is almost forgotten today and his work hard to find but worth the search; look for English paperback reprints.

M. R. James
Ghost Stories of an Antiquary (1904), *More Ghost Stories* (1911), *A Thin Ghost and Others* (1919), *A Warning to the Curious* (1925). Esp. "Oh Whistle & I'll Come to You, My Lad," "The Tractate Middoth," and "Casting of the Runes." Also worthy of attention: "The Mezzotint," "Mr Humphreys and his Inheritance," "A Neighbor's Landmark," "A View From a Hill," and "A Warning to the Curious."

Widely considered to be the greatest writer of ghost stories who ever lived, James was a scholar who wrote only one story a year. Much attention on his characters' part trying to reconstruct the events behind the haunting in order to understand and deal with it. His complete ghost stories (easily available from Penguin and elsewhere) are full of enough ideas to run literally years of campaigns.

The Master: Edgar Poe
"The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," "Ms. Found in a Bottle," "The Lighthouse" (unfinished), "Ligeia," "William Wilson," "The Pit & the Pendulum," "The Premature Burial," "The Masque of the Red Death," "Silence," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The System of Doctor Tarr & Professor Fether," "The Cask of Amontillado," and *The Adventures of A. Gordon Pym* (1838).

All of Poe is worth reading, but the stories listed above are the easiest to adapt for LIVING DEATH campaigns. Poe not only invented the modern short story and the detective story but wrote a good many comic stories ("Never Bet the Devil Your Head," aptly subtitled "A Story With A Moral"; "The System of Doctor Tarr & Professor Fether," about what happens when the inmates get their chance to run the asylum; and "The Premature Burial," which ends by advising the reader to take long walks and avoid morbid stories "like this one") and a novel (*The Adventures of A. Gordon Pym*, a long nightmare of disasters from which the main character cannot awaken). Players who know their Poe only from bad movies and other "adaptations" are in for a shock when you throw the real thing at them. See also his poems, especially "Ulalume," "A Dream Within a Dream," "El Dorado," and of course "The Raven." For mood music, The Alan Parson Project's Poe-inspired first album, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (1976), cannot be bettered.

Bram Stoker
Dracula, of course (1897), but also "The Burial of the Rats" (a poor story, but easily adaptable into a chilling scenario) and "Dracula's Guest" (an out-take from the novel).

Forget Saberhagen, Coppola, and all the rest of the apologists; this is the real Dracula——not a sexy seducer, not an angst-ridden romantic, but a monster pure and simple. Much imitated, never equalled. Told entirely in the form of diary entries, letters, newspaper clippings, and the like; a very "modern" story for its time (one character even dictates his contributions onto an early recording machine). Almost a century old and it's never been out of print. Avoid the movie novelizations like poison, and all the movies as well except for the original with Bela Lugosi.

R. W. Chambers
The King in Yellow, esp. "The Yellow Sign" (1895)

A collection of sinister, suggestive short stories, mostly about artists in Paris. This is where Lovecraft lifted the idea for the book which drives all its readers mad. Look for the Ace paperback reprint or the Dover collection (*The King in Yellow and Other Horror Stories*) edited by E. F. Bleiler.

W. B. Yeats
"Rosa Alchemica", "The Tables of the Law", & "The Adoration of the Magi" (1897)

Three short stories, suppressed from the original publication of Yeats' book *The Secret Rose*, relating the fates of those who dabble in the occult. Yeats was not only one of this century's greatest poets, he was also a practicing magician and the leader of the Order of the Golden Dawn for several years. Look for

the stories at any good university library or bookstore as part of a collection of Yeats' fiction called *Mythologies*. See also his poems, especially "The Phases of the Moon" (in which the main characters from two of these stories reappear) and "All Soul's Night" (where he invokes the ghost of Golden Dawn founder MacGregor Mathers, among others).

Algernon Blackwood
John Silence (1908). Also "The Listener," "The Empty House," "The Willows," "The Wendigo," and many others.

Another Golden Dawn associate who excelled in short stories about hauntings. The short stories collected in John Silence tell the exploits of a psychic detective. Equally good whether he limits his scope to a single room ("The Listener") or a long trek through the wilderness ("The Willows," "The Wendigo"). Look for the Dover collection (*Best Ghost Stories of Algernon Blackwood*) edited by E. F. Bleiler

Arthur Machan
"The Novel of the White Powder" (from *The Three Impostors*, 1895)

One of the few horror writers who has had a story actually escape into folklore ("The Bowmen"), Machan is best remembered today for "The Great God Pan," a story which has not aged well, and the grail story "The Great Return." However, the episodic novel *The Three Impostors*, especially the inset stories, can be used as the basis for a thoroughly creepy LIVING DEATH campaign. The misleadingly titled story "The Novel of the White Powder," for instance, relates the fate of a man who devolves into protoplasm if deprived of a certain rare chemical. The book was reprinted by Ballantine in the '70s as part of their Adult Fantasy Series; it's also worthwhile checking the old stacks in used bookstores and large libraries on the off-chance it might show up.

Ambrose Bierce
"The Damned Thing", "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," "An Inhabitant of Carcosa," "The Suitable Surroundings," "The Middle Toe of the Right Foot," "Mysterious Disappearances" "The Moonlit Road," "The Stranger"

Bierce's mysterious disappearance has rather overshadowed his work, which is characterized by a vicious sense of humor: the first three sections of "The Damned Thing" are entitled "One Does Not Always Eat What Is On The Table" (a corpse), "What May Happen in a Field of Wild Oats" (a gruesome murder), and "A Man Though Naked May Be in Rags" (a reference to the state of his body after the monster is through with it). Sometimes it's difficult to figure out exactly what happens in one of Bierce's stories (cf. "The Death of Halpin Frayser"), but that only adds to their malignance. E. F. Bleiler's collection for Dover, *Ghost and Horror Stories of Ambrose Bierce*, is notable both for the excellence of its selection and for the acid portrait Bleiler paints of the author (required reading for anyone who wants Bierce himself to show up in their campaign).

Sheridan LeFanu
"Green Tea," "The Murdered Cousin," and "Carmilla"

Better in concept than execution, LeFanu's work (of which the three titles given above are a mere sample) nevertheless sets up intriguing situations full of role-playing potential; skimming any of the three Dover collections (*Green Tea and Other Ghost Stories*, *Ghost Stories and Mysteries*, *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. LeFanu*) will provide great adventure hooks for any LIVING DEATH DM.

Henry James
"The Turn of the Screw" (1898) & "The Jolly Corner" (1908)

A major figure of American literature who loved to play games with his readers; we're just as much in the dark about whether there really is a ghost in "The Turn of the Screw" now as when it was first written, while "The Jolly Corner" achieves the admirable feat of portraying a man haunted by his own ghost. James' fiction is available in any university library.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman
"The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)

A first-person narrative by a woman who's going mad—whether the events she describes drive her mad or are the result of her delusion is up to the reader to describe. Claustrophobic in the extreme.

Clark Ashton Smith
"Genius Loci" (1933)

The greatest author of the Weird Tales school, who puts hacks like Lovecraft and Howard to shame. Very, very cold-blooded (who else would entitle a play *The Dead Will Cuckold You*?). The story listed above is one of the few set in our world rather than some fantasy setting; it describes a small patch of land that has become sentient (and malevolent)—a new twist on the sinister landscape that forms the backdrop of so many tales. Smith's work is very difficult to find; check bargain book bins and used book dealers for reprint collections from Ballantine (early '70s) or Timescape (early '80s; "Genius Loci" can be found in the 1982 Timescape paperback *The Last Incantation*). Small houses like Necronomicon Press and Arkham House periodically reissue Smith material that's usually well worth checking out.

H. P. Lovecraft
The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (1927)

A prolific reader who snagged all the "best bits" out of his reading and wove them into pastiches of his own; reading Lovecraft is like skimming through an anthology of all the horror writers who preceded him in print. This short novel is his best, making good use of his local knowledge of New England.

Lord Dunsany
"The Bureau de Exchange du Maux," "The Field," "The Highwayman," "Where the Tides Ebb and Flow," "The Ghosts," "How Nuth Would Have Practised His Art upon the Gnoles," "The Hashish Man," "A Narrow Escape," "The Kith of the Elf-Folk," "Poor Old Bill," "The Wonderful Window," "Taking Up Piccadilly," "The Sphinx in Thebes (Massachusetts)," "The Trouble in Leafy Green Street," "Lobster Salad," "The Three Infernal Jokes," "The Return," "The Old Brown Coat," and "By Night in the Forest." See also the play *A Night at an Inn* (1916).

Dunsany packs more ideas into a single volume of short stories than most writers do in a six-book series; the selection given above are mostly drawn from the eight collections of short stories he published between 1905 and 1919. Whether describing what it's like to hang from a gibbet ("The Highwayman") or positing that a place can be haunted by events from the future as well as the past ("The Field"), his work is full of characters, settings, and scenarios that can enrich any role-playing campaign. He's especially good at inserting a wicked twist at the very end—typical is *A Night at an Inn*, where a gang of crooks who have stolen the eye out of an idol successfully outwit the vengeful priests who have pursued them, only to perish at the hands of the idol itself. Avoid his novels and look for

his short stories: the original collections are the best and can still be found on the shelves of older libraries. Failing that, Ballantine reprinted three volumes' worth as part of the Adult Fantasy Series in the early to mid '70s and E. F. Bleiler put together a good selection as *Gods, Men, and Ghosts* for Dover.

Robert Lewis Stevenson
The Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886)

A classic that actually deserves its reputation, and a superb piece of misdirection. If possible, see the Claude Rains movie as well.

Nonfiction

R. A. Gilbert
The Golden Dawn: Twilight of Magicians (1983)

A well-documented, clearly-written account of the Golden Dawn, the most important group of ceremonial magicians in the 1890s, for those who wish to incorporate this historical group into their game. Gilbert describes the origins of the group, says something about their beliefs and practices, and details just exactly who belonged to it and when: among its members at one time or another were W. B. Yeats, MacGregor Mathers, A. E. Waite, Aleister Crowley, Arthur Machan, Algernon Blackwood, and Charles Williams.

Recent, but Still Worthy

Robert Arthur
Ghosts and More Ghosts (1963), esp "Footsteps Invisible," "Do You Believe in Ghosts?", "Obstinate Uncle Otis," & "Mr. Dexter's Dragon."

A neglected author, most of whose best work appeared in *Unknown* and similar magazines in the early 1940s. "Do You Believe in Ghosts?" describes how belief can actually create monsters and reads like a Carnacki story gone horribly wrong, while "Obstinate Uncle Otis" tells of a man who has the power to think things in (and out) of existence simply by believing in them (or not). Arthur was the editor of many Alfred Hitchcock anthologies, and these are probably the best places to look for his work.

John Bellairs
The Face in the Frost (1969)

One of the only books ever to manage to be both funny and frightening at the same time; mostly set in a fantasy world but with the climax set in our own world. A perfect example of an evil wizard setting something in motion that's beyond his control.

Barbara Hambly
Those Who Hunt the Night (1988)

A recent novel set in Edwardian times in which a scholarly ex-spy is hired by vampires to find out who's staking them by daylight. A little too "modern-day" in its medical solution to the mystery, but nevertheless a worthy effort to write historical horror set in our period.

Jonathan Carroll
The Land of Laughs (1980)

A would-be author researching the life of a children's writer for a possible biography comes across a town populated almost entirely by fictional characters created by the late author—characters who want him to become their new author and continue their story. Contemporary but easily adaptable to any time and place.

Roger Zelazny
A Night in Lonesome October (1993)

The late, great Zelazny's own take on the Cthulhu mythos; a funny little novel told from the point of view of Jack the Ripper's dog. The cast includes Dr. Frankenstein and his monster, Count Dracula, Sherlock Holmes, Rasputin, a druid, a witch, and Larry Talbot (who just happens to look a lot like Lon Chaney Jr.). A ready-made LIVING DEATH scenario for the player characters to stumble across, not knowing which of the participants are trying to summon the Great Ones (or, in this case, the Red Death itself) and which seek to bar the gate.

Don't Bother

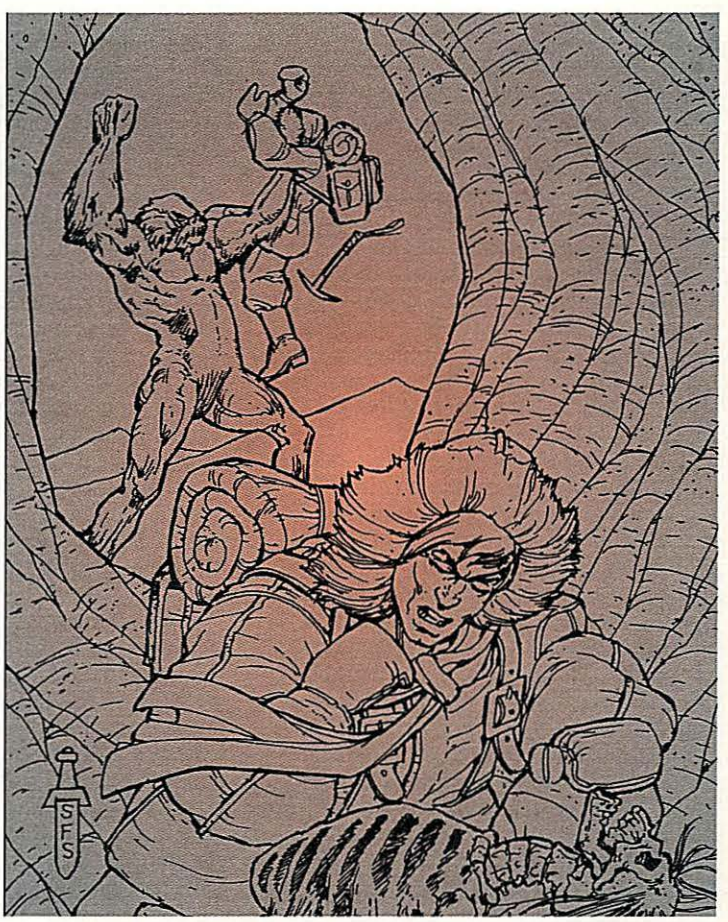
Mary Shelly
Frankenstein (1818)

You know the story already; do yourself a favor and skip Shelley's long-winded philosophizing, unless the thought of chapter after chapter of a teenager author's "deep thoughts" is your cup of tea. The Boris Karloff film is one of those rare cases where Hollywood actually improved on the original.

Gaston Leroux
The Phantom of the Opera

Stick to the Lon Chaney silent film or the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical; Leroux's original novel is poorly organized, sentimental, and boring.

Stephen King
King is the unchallenged "king of the mountain" who's put his stamp on all contemporary horror, which is exactly why a DM should avoid basing scenarios on his plots: the material is too familiar, and too modern in tone, for classic gothic horror.



...Horseman, Pass By!

Finding the Right Tone for a LIVING DEATH™ Scenario

by Greg Ferris

One of the earliest memories of my youth is of sitting at the foot of my bed, watching my old black and white television. It was Saturday afternoon, which meant that the "Horror Movie of the Week" was on. I forced myself to watch, as I had countless weeks before, while mummies, vampires, and mad scientists paraded across the screen.

I was a child who was scared of his own shadow, often being "haunted" by the movie monsters, long after the films had ended. Yet for some reason, I sat transfixed by these tales of terror.

You too, I would wager, have had similar experiences in your lives. Something about us just loves to be scared, whether you developed your love for the genre at a 50's drive-in or by popping a video into your home entertainment center.

It is this very feeling, the exhilaration of a good fright, that you should feed upon when creating adventures for the LIVING DEATH setting.

Attaining a Feel for the 1890s

Many players and GMs alike have little experience outside of a fantasy setting. While the great majority of gamers today could easily conjure up visions of a musty dungeon corridor, how many could picture their characters walking down the busy streets of London in 1895? For this reason, it is very important that you build a general feel for the 1890s into your adventures.

Go out and invest a little time before you sit down to begin your writing. Crack open a history book, read a novel, or maybe just watch a couple of old horror movies. Learn how authors describe gaslit cities and eerie fog-choked countryside. Familiarize yourself with the clothing styles that were popular during the period. There's no need to do mountains of research, just a bit of preparation. With your newly acquired knowledge, you'll be able to write more realistic and believable descriptions. This, in turn, will allow the people who will be playing your adventures more easily to imagine themselves actually being there.

Setting

Now that we've discussed the time period, let's take some time to think about exactly where your adventure is going to take place. The moment that you mention horror in the 1890s, certain locations come to mind. For me, the "big 3" would have to be New England, London, and the wilds of Transylvania. It's wonderful that these places are so rich with lore that we immediately think of them, but it does cause a bit of a problem. How many adventures in Transylvania will a LIVING DEATH player play before things start to get boring?

Explore new locales for your adventures. What evil lurks in the mountains of West Virginia? How do you explain the mysterious occurrences in Australia? The possibilities are endless!

The creation of myths and legends has been a part of human nature throughout history. As such, almost every location on earth has some type of lore attached to it. Some legends, such as the Loch Ness Monster or Bigfoot, are familiar to all. Others are less well known.

Luckily, even the most obscure legends are fairly easy to uncover, simply because people love to talk about them. It is likely that you know someone who lives in another city, state, or even country. The next time that you find yourself stumped for original ideas, give them a call. Ask them if they know of any legends or strange occurrences which have been linked to their region. Who knows, maybe they will come up with something interesting that you can use. Then add a little to the legend, maybe even make it a bit more outrageous. Before you know it, you'll have the foundation of an original adventure.

OK, so maybe you don't know anybody, or maybe they can't help you. What are you going to do? Try picking a location off the globe. Next, run down to the library and see what types of material are available for your location. History books and travel books are a great start and sometimes you'll even luck out and find a specific book about legends for the region. Then, just look them over until something strikes you.

Remember, you don't have to limit yourself to existing legends. You could easily base your adventures around everyday sites. After all, cemeteries, battlefields, and old ruins are perfect locales for LIVING DEATH adventures, and they can be found all over the world.

Villains

Next, you'll want to start thinking about the antagonist of your adventure. As with the best horror movies and novels, your villain (or villains) should be as charismatic and mysterious as possible. As a matter of fact, in many of the classics, the villain is much more interesting than any of the protagonists.

Feel free to escape from stereotypical vampire/mad scientist stories and explore new areas. There's no reason why you couldn't import your favorite creature from the AD&D MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® accessory and drop it into a Louisiana bayou or equally suitable location.

Perhaps aliens have landed somewhere on Gothic Earth and are causing no end of trouble. After all, if the Red Death is from another dimension, isn't it feasible that it has already corrupted creatures from other worlds? The concept of UFO's wasn't unheard of, even as early as 1890. They could easily work their way into your adventure.

Finally, who's to say that your adventure has to be centered around the supernatural or otherworldly? Even mundane events and common criminals could be worked into your scenarios. Many mystery villains, such as those found in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, make excellent opponents for characters playing in a LIVING DEATH scenario. Professor Moriarty is no less dangerous for his lack of supernatural powers. Whatever sort of villain you decide to use, be sure to build a mystique about them which will keep your players guessing. If players know that they're dealing with a vampire early on, they'll break out with the crosses and stakes, and the whole adventure will lose something. On the other hand, if faced with a three legged, purple beast with lobster claws, they'll have no idea of where to begin.

Creating Terrifying Adventures
This final step is certainly the most difficult you'll face while writing your adventures. It's downright hard to scare a group of people who are, in reality, sitting around a table and playing a game.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do is to make sure that you have the undivided attention of your audience. By following the suggestions already mentioned, you should be well on your way to creating an interesting and original scenario. After all, if your players are bored you'll never be able to scare them with your imaginary creations.

Design your plot so that the players get only a taste of a problem to begin with. Make them work for their clues and keep the answers just out of their reach. Perhaps they arrive on the scene just after the departure of the villain. As they continue, reward them a little, but always keep them guessing. Let them catch a glimpse of the shadowy creature or hear maniacal laughter on the wind. The tension should keep building throughout the adventure. Then, when they're on the edge of their seats, WHAM!, hit them with the climax.

You can also isolate the party, both from each other as well as the rest of the world. Soon they'll start to feel a bit helpless, never knowing what to expect. If the storm strands them on the island, the won't be able to go get the reinforcements they were counting on. Shifting walls or spinning bookcases are ideal for sticking a party member on his own.

Try leaving notes instructing the DM to read certain descriptions very softly and others quite loudly. The change in tone can work like music in a horror movie. Players will often find this somewhat unsettling.

Again, the best thing that you can do is to think of the books and movies which have had an effect on you. Pay attention to what makes them so gripping. If you do, you'll be well on your way to putting your players in the palms of your hands.

Various Resources
Aside from books and movies, there are a number of other great places to look when working on a LIVING DEATH adventure.

If you are lucky enough to own a computer and a modem, there are all kinds of things to check out. Almost every commercial on-line service has some type of history bulletin board. This is a great place to get fast answers to any number of questions about the 1890s. I've found that most people on such boards will just fall over themselves to help you.

Many library systems across the country now have systems which allow PC owners to access reference materials from home.

Believe it or not, it's still possible to get a copy of a newspaper from the 1890s. Quite a few mail order catalogs out there offer "Authentic Birthdate Newspapers". A couple of the companies can still provide papers from just before the turn of the century. Of course if you don't need to own it, many libraries can provide microfiche of old papers.

Over the years there have been a number of fine comic book titles which have explored the horror genre. These have been from various publishers and may be worth investigating.

❑

Masque of the Red Death

Character Record Sheet

Character Name		
Class	Age	Sex
Kit	Hair	Eyes
XP Level	Height	Weight
Alignment	Features	
Nationality		

Character Portrait

Attack Table

THAC0	
-1	1
-2	2
-3	3
-4	4
-5	5
-6	6
-7	7
-8	8
-9	9
-10	10

Roll number or higher on 1d20 to hit listed AC

Strength		Melee Attack	Melee Damage	Weight Allow.	Maximum Press	Open Doors	Bend / Lift
Dexterity		Surprise Adjust.	Missile Attack	Defensive Adjust.			
Constitution		Hit Point Adjust.	System Shock	Resurrect. Survival	Poison Save	Regen. Rate	
Intelligence		Add'l Profs	Maximum Spell Lvl	Learn Spells	Maximum Spl / Lvl	Spell Immunity	
Wisdom		Magical Defense	Spell Failure	Spell Immunity			
Charisma		Maximum Henchmen	Loyalty Adjust	Reaction Adjust.			

Armor Class

Armor Worn

Base AC	Rear AC	Surprise AC

Hit Points

Base Hits

Saving Throws

Roll Number or higher on 1d20 to succeed

Paralysis, Poison, & Death Magic	Rods, Staves, & Wands	Petrify & Polymorph	Breath Weapons	Magical Spells	Fear Check	Horror Check	Madness Check

Experience Points

XP Goal	XP Adj.

Experience Point Total

Weapon Proficiencies

Initial Slots	Add'l Slots	Nonprof. Penalty

Weapon Type	Rounds	Type	Speed	No. Attacks	Attack Adj.	Ranges (Att. Adj.) S / M (-2) / L (-4)	Damage Adj.	Damage v. S/M	Damage v. L

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Masque of the Red Death

Character Record Sheet

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Initial Slots	Bonus Slots	Add'l Slots

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Mod.

Gothic Heroes

Character Creation Guidelines for the LIVING DEATH™ Campaign

The following are guidelines for initially creating your own LIVING DEATH character—and for enhancing that character when you play in official tournaments and gain experience points and other benefits. You may use the official LIVING DEATH Character sheet or provide one of your own, as long as it is complete and easy for a judge to read. You are responsible for keeping a copy of your character and a list of all the items, wealth, and experience points he or she earns during tournament play. You must be able to provide a Treasure Certificate to prove that your character has earned any special treasure appearing on your character sheet.

All LIVING DEATH characters must fit the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules as modified by the *Masque of the Red Death* campaign expansion for the RAVENLOFT® game rules, as well as the special campaign rules in this Player Pack. Follow these steps to create your own LIVING DEATH character:

1) Select a Class and Kit
All LIVING DEATH characters must be human, but all of the classes and kits in the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set are available for play. (Additional kits will become available as the campaign progresses.) Dual-classed characters are permitted, but LIVING DEATH characters may change classes only once, after which they may not change again nor earn experience in the former class.

2) Choose an Alignment
In Gothic Earth, a character's alignment is more important than in other Living Settings. All LIVING DEATH PCs must be of Good alignment, but they may be Lawful, Neutral, or Chaotic. Any LIVING DEATH PC whose alignment shifts to Neutral suffers penalties until she returns to a Good alignment. Characters whose alignment shifts to evil are immediately and permanently considered NPCs and may no longer be played in LIVING DEATH tournaments. Guidelines for adjudicating alignment shifts appear in the judges guidelines, as well as in individual adventures.

This alignment restriction does not mean that you cannot play a tough or "edgy" character. It simply means that all heroes in the LIVING DEATH setting are motivated by good reasons to oppose the evil of the Red Death and all its minions. It's why we call them heroes.

3) Assign 72 Points to Ability Scores
You have 72 points to divide among your character's Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma scores. Scores may range from 3–18, but no two scores may be the same. Thus, PCs may have only one Ability Score of 18. Characters begin at first level and must meet the minimum statistic scores for their classes and kits.

4) Select Proficiencies
Note that when using the optional proficiencies rule, PCs do not acquire languages beyond their one native tongue except by spending proficiency slots. All proficiencies listed in the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set are available for use. Additional proficiencies will be made available as the campaign progresses, in some cases allowing characters to gain more proficiencies than they normally would be allowed.

5) Select Equipment
LIVING DEATH PCs begin play with the maximum possible money described for their class in the *Masque of the Red Death* rules. You may use this money to purchase any equipment from the *Masque of the Red Death* rule book. The beginning of some adventures, however, may preclude the use of unconcealed weapons or explosives.

6) Describe the Character
Since problem solving and role-playing are even more important in the LIVING DEATH campaign than in others, your character should be more than just a collection of powers. Your character should have a distinctive personality, a memorable appearance, and an interesting history. So before your LIVING DEATH character is done, fill in the physical description, personality, and background sections of the character sheet (or attach a page or two of description to the sheet). These descriptions can be as sparse or as elaborate as you like, but all character backgrounds should include two elements:

- At some time in your character's past, she has had an encounter with the supernatural. The experience could be as subtle as a night spent locked in a presumably haunted house, or as extreme as a personal encounter with a werewolf. Regardless of the nature of the encounter, it instilled a lasting fear of and opposition to evil and the supernatual. (Ironically, many LIVING DEATH characters will themselves possess knowledge of the mystic arts or borderline supernatural abilities known as knacks.)
- Sometime after your character's unusual encounter, she received a cryptic message inviting her to join a secretive group, a qabal established to oppose evil in all its forms, but especially those supernatural phenomena which seem to be occuring with more frequency as the turn of the century approaches. While your character learned nothing more about the group, she knows that their sign is the white rose, and that when they need his help, she shall be contacted again.

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Hit Point Advancement

LIVING DEATH PCs have maximum hit points at first level. At each additional level, LIVING DEATH PCs gain hit points based on their base hit die type:

Class	HD Type	HPS/ Level
Soldier	d10	7
Mystic	d8	5
Tradesman	d6	4
Adept	d4	2

Hit points for high Constitution scores are added to these base figures. For example, a soldier (warrior class) with a 17 Constitution gains 10 hps per level beyond first.

In A Pinch...

LIVING DEATH™ Campaign Hero Point Rules

Hero Points are a game device for rewarding characters for particularly selfless or heroic actions. They affect the outcome of die rolls, but promote role-playing rather than just number crunching. Note: The Hero Point system for the LIVING DEATH campaign is similar but not identical to that used in the LIVING JUNGLE™ setting.

Only good characters can earn Hero Points; since all LIVING DEATH PCs must be of Good alignment, this restriction penalizes only those PCs whose alignment shifts during the campaign. Only Player Characters (PCs) can earn Hero Points; non-player characters (NPCs) never have them. Only a few Hero Point certificates are available with each LIVING DEATH tournament. After all are distributed, no more are available for that session, even though characters may continue to perform heroic deeds.

Earning Hero Points

PCs earn Hero Points by acting bravely, selflessly, daringly, and dramatically. The judge determines whether a PC has earned a Hero Point for any particular action; but since defining these qualities is difficult, here are some general guidelines about what do not and what do constitute heroic actions:

- Heroic actions are not hesitant or calculated. A soldier whose companions must persuade him to confront a deadly assassin to save an NPC from death is not heroic. An adept who pauses to consider whether his spells will be more effective than weapons against the champion before agreeing to fight him is being brave, but not heroic. Heroism is courageous, not scheming.
- Heroic actions are not performed for personal benefit. If two PCs struggle with each other to reach the limelight, then neither may receive a Hero Point: "I'll swing down and scoop the ambassador off the deck of the assassin's ship!" "No, I'll be the one to do it! The senator is watching!" Furthermore, when a PC performs an act which has an obvious reward (fighting the assassin to take his antique scimitar) no Hero Point is awarded. If the PC expects a reward for his action, then it is not heroic. Heroism is selfless, not selfish.
- Heroic actions are not safe and easy. A PC must face and realize she faces a serious threat for an action to be heroic. Thus, a detective who leaps into a pit of vipers to save a fallen comrade is acting heroically—unless she thinks she is immune to the poison or that the vipers are no real threat. A reporter who rushes across a rope bridge to save a young boy from an imminent landslide is heroic only if he has a real chance to fall or be caught in the landslide—and knows it. Heroic actions are dangerous and difficult.
- Heroic actions are not mechanical and bland. If a player simply declares, "Oh, I guess McEwan will fight the thugs," then the judge shouldn't award a Hero Point. On the other hand, a player who accepts a challenge with real panache is acting heroically: "Stand back, you villain! Your evil plan ends now!" Heroism is grand and dramatic.

When a judge deems a PC's action worthy of a Hero Point, he or she notes the award and hands the player a Hero Point Certificate. The PC can use the Hero Point immediately.

A PC can earn a maximum of one Hero Point per tournament.

A PC may never have more Hero Points than he has levels of experience. For example, any heroic actions performed when a 3rd level character already has three Hero Points are still heroic, but they do not earn Hero Points. (Note: Some special items and situations may allow a PC to exceed this limit.)

Spending Hero Points

Hero Points affect rolls which determine the results of a PC's actions, including "passive" actions like resisting a spell effect. Hero Points do not affect an opponent's rolls. So a PC can spend a Hero Point to raise his own chance to hit an opponent, but the PC can't spend a point to lower the opponent's saving throw or Ability check. A player may use Hero Points in one of three ways: to modify a die before it is thrown, to modify a die after it is thrown, or to re-roll a failed die roll.

- Before a die is thrown, a PC may "spend" a Hero Point to gain a +2/d20 (or +10%/d100) bonus for combat rolls, saving throws, Ability checks, system shock, resurrection survival, or virtually any other d20 or d100 roll during the game. A PC may spend up to two Hero Points at a time in this manner, gaining a maximum bonus of +4/d20 (+20%/d100) on a roll before the die is thrown.
- After a die is thrown, a PC may spend a Hero Point to gain a +1/d20 (or +5%/d100) bonus on those same sorts of rolls. Again, a PC may spend up to two Hero Points at a time in this manner, gaining a maximum bonus of +2/d20 (+10%/d100) on a roll after the die is thrown.
- Once per tournament round, a PC may spend two Hero Points to re-roll any failed d20 or d100 die roll.

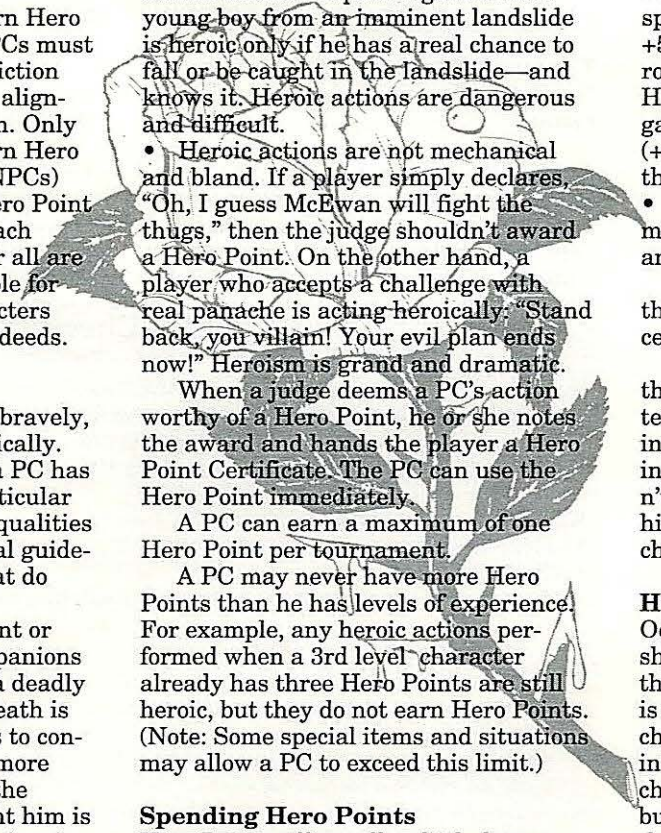
Whenever a PC spends a Hero Point, the judge must collect the Hero Point certificate and tear it in half.

PCs may use Hero Points to benefit the rolls of other good-aligned characters, PCs or NPCs. Using a Hero Point in this manner is generous, but it is not in itself a heroic action (so the PC doesn't earn another Hero Point for using his own Hero Points to benefit another character).

Hero Points and Judge Rolls

Occasionally, judges may—and should—roll dice secretly to determine the result of an action when that result is not immediately obvious to the player character who performs the action. For instance, a NPC adept may cast a charm person spell upon an opponent, but the DM makes the victim's saving throw secretly so that the PC doesn't realize at once whether the spell worked.

Any time the judge makes a secret roll based on a PC's action, the PC may elect to spend a Hero Point to affect that roll, but the judge still rolls the dice secretly. Judges are encouraged to be strictly truthful and fair when making secret rolls which are affected by Hero Points, but they are under no obligation to show the results of those rolls to the player who spent Hero Points on them.



Atmosfear

Judging the Gothic Earth Setting

The LIVING DEATH™ setting requires a little special knowledge of both writers and judges. A good understanding of the basic RAVENLOFT® setting rules and a familiarity with the *Masque of the Red Death* expansion setting are vital.

To maintain a certain amount of consistency within the campaign, several of the optional rules in the *Player's Handbook* and DUNGEON MASTER® *Guide* are considered standard or strongly recommended in LIVING DEATH tournaments. In the case of optional rules, it is a very good idea to confer with the players before beginning play. Requiring critical hits and fumbles from players who hate those optional rules, for example, is a bad way to start a round.

- The "At Death's Door" rule which allows PCs to survive until reduced to –10 hit points is considered a standard rule.

- Individual initiative rolls with modifiers for weapons speed and spell casting times are strongly recommended, but not required. Judges who choose to use standard or group initiative should so inform the players before beginning play. This optional rule is especially important when dealing with spellcaster heroes and NPCs.

- The simple critical hit and fumble system presented in the DUNGEON MASTER *Guide*, allowing attackers an additional attack when rolling a natural 20 and requiring those who roll a natural 1 to lose an attack, is strongly recommended. DMs choosing this option should definitely confer with the players before the round begins.

- Note that the LIVING DEATH campaign uses nonweapon proficiencies, not secondary skills and bonus languages. The bonus language value provides additional proficiency slots (weapon or nonweapon, at the player's option). All characters begin with one free native tongue; all other languages must be acquired with proficiency slots.

Note that LIVING DEATH judges never need to deal with calculating experience awards, creating character classes, spell components, spell research, and other campaign-related rules which are supplanted by LIVING DEATH character creation or house rules, so none of the optional rules governing these topics will ever apply to your tournament sessions.

LIVING DEATH House Rules

The LIVING DEATH incorporates a few "houserules" to make play unique to the setting.

- AD&D® Game core rules, the RAVENLOFT setting rules, and the *Masque of the Red Death* rules are the only ones used in LIVING DEATH events. Optional rules from the *Player's Handbook* supplements and other sources are never used, though POLYHEDRON® Newszine may print expanded kits and other special rules for use with the setting.

- Player characters may not have "pre-cast" any protective spells before the start of a session. Even though it may seem logical that a PC wizard or priest may have cast some spells as a matter of habit, for the sake of simplicity and consistency, none may be in effect at the start of a session.

- To repeat an important point: The "At Death's Door" rule is especially important in the LIVING DEATH setting, since raise dead spells are simply not available. PCs can't just spend a large

Judge Checklist

If you haven't judged many Network events, or even if you're a veteran judge, you may find this checklist useful in preparing for a tournament round. Whenever you coax a friend into judging LIVING DEATH events, you may help ease his or her anxiety about the paperwork by passing along the guidelines and this sheet.

Well before the tournament:
- Read the adventure
- Read it again & make notes!
- Prepare any miniatures or other props you like to use (optional)

Just before play:
- Introduce yourself and greet the players; help any player without a character create one (veteran players may be able to help, also)
- Review each player's character sheet, checking briefly to make sure that the Ability scores total 72 points and that the proficiencies, equipment, and treasure all seem to be correct
- Ask each player to put up a name card with his character name at the top, player name at the bottom
- Briefly review the tournament instructions for the players, pointing out the time limit and scoring instructions; entertain player questions

Play the Game. Have lots of fun!

After play:
- Inform the players of their characters' Hero Point, experience point, and treasure awards; pass out any necessary certificates
- Distribute scoring forms
- Fill out your own scoring form, and complete the Event Summary
- Collect scoring forms from the players
- Fill out the rest of the scoring package
- Pat yourself on the back—you've shown six players a great time!

sum of money to raise dead companions at the end of a session.

- In addition to experience and treasure, LIVING DEATH PCs can earn Hero Points. Complete information on Hero Points appears elsewhere in this issue.

Player Character Sheets

Players must track their characters' ability scores, proficiencies, and other character information; though they are on their honors not to cheat, you should review character sheets at the beginning of a session not only to familiarize yourself with the characters, but also to point out any errors you might spot.

Unlike LIVING CITY™ characters, LIVING DEATH characters will not have magical or special treasure that is not accompanied by a tournament receipt. If a soldier PC claims to have a *Sword of Waylan* which inflicts 2d4+2 damage, sheds light in a 20-foot radius, and detects magic, be very suspicious. To use the item, the player must show you the treasure sheet which describes the magical item. All LIVING DEATH tournaments which include special or magical treasure will also include these treasure sheets. Players are responsible for keeping track of them, and lost Treasure Certificates represent the loss of the character's treasure.

Awarding Experience

Experience awards for LIVING DEATH adventures appear both at the end of each encounter and in the Experience Summary table at the end of the tournament. Awards go to each player who participated in the "trigger event." For instance, if the experience award is listed for "Defeating the thugs and cultists," then each PC who contributed to the defeat receives experience, even if the PC was in a support position (guarding the rear, casting protective spells, etc.) rather than in melee.

At the end of a LIVING DEATH tournament, tell the players how much experience their characters earned, then check and initial their Tournament Record Sheets. This quick procedure helps ensure that players aren't confused about the experience their characters earned, and it encourages accuracy as much as honesty.

Treasure

Player Characters should divide treasure among themselves; the judge should not have to intervene in the decisions. However, you should summarize the total treasure at the end of your session and remind the players that they must divide it among their heroes. In the rare instance that players can't agree upon the division of the spoils, you may wish to mediate the disagreement, suggesting that the players roll dice for first choice of treasure, or voicing any other suggestions which occur to you. Give the players some help if they need it, but let them make their own choices.

Once treasure is divided, give the Treasure Sheets for special items to the players whose characters received them. Check the players' Tournament Record sheets and initial them.

The Event Summary

First-run LIVING DEATH events will include an Event Summary at the end of the adventure. These are lists of important events that occur during the adventure—or which may occur. At the end of the convention, these summaries are returned to RPGA® Headquarters, where the LIVING DEATH coordinator tallies the results and logs them for future tournaments. The actions of heroes at first-run events can have permanent and often world-wide effects on the LIVING DEATH campaign.

For example, say a tournament runs for the first time at Death Con I. A line of the Event Summary may read, "Did the heroes discover that Ambassador Chartreuse is a vampire and destroy him?" If more than half of the tables run at Death Con I note that the heroes did not, in fact, discover the ambassador's secret, then he may return to meet the heroes again in a later adventure. Likewise, if most of the heroes at a first-run event fail to prevent a mass murder at the World's Fair, then that horrible event becomes a part of the history of the LIVING DEATH campaign.

At the end of each tournament round, take a few moments to fill out the Event Summary. It will be a simple list of about 10 yes-or-no and short-answer questions.

Troubleshooting

There are times when even the best of judges will feel at wit's end because of an unforeseen problem in the adventure, a surprising bit of PC ingenuity, or even disruptive or just plain difficult players. Problems with scenarios are rare, but they do occur; the only solution for them is for the judge to make an "on the spot" decision about how to overcome the problem, then be sure that the event coordinators are aware of the problem. If you ever run an event which seems to have a serious flaw in it, don't hesitate to write to Network HQ with a description of the problem and any suggested corrections you may have in mind. We are glad to fix errors in tournaments.

There's nothing you can do about PC ingenuity except grin, make up a creative solution to whatever problem it poses, and wing it. For instance, if your PCs are faced with a riddle which they must solve before an eccentric medium will allow them to pass, and they give an incorrect but logical answer, you can respond in one of three ways: consider the answer incorrect, because it isn't what the medium expected; consider the answer correct, and role-play the medium's acceptance of an alternate answer, or; role-play the medium laughing, then telling the PCs they may have a second chance at the riddle since their first answer was wrong, but so close. Which of these three options is correct? It could be any of them, depending on how the scenario is written, how the PCs have been playing, and how you feel the adventure will be the most fun. This is the real reason you're called a judge.

Difficult players come in several varieties, and for any problem there's no one solution that works with every player. But here are some general suggestions for common problems some players may pose.

Some players seem to vanish once a session starts, and others are so forward that they seem to be standing in front of everyone else at the same time. These are chameleons and peacocks, players who either don't participate much or who participate to the point of dominating the group. On one hand, since each player is judged on how well he role-played, you shouldn't focus too much on one player or ignore another. But you should encourage those who may feel intimidated or shy to become more active, and you should shift NPC attention from any domineering players to those who are politely waiting their turn for the spotlight. How much attention is too much? That's another judgement call, but the best you can do is remain impartial and strive for the fair and fun solution. ❑

Ghost Writing

Tournament Guidelines for the LIVING DEATH™ Campaign

Like previous living settings, the LIVING DEATH campaign allows players to bring their own characters to the tournament table. In this sense, LIVING DEATH tournaments are easier to write, since you need not provide characters. Not knowing the exact make-up of the heroes, however, presents the new problems of writing balanced encounters for an unknown mix of characters, determining experience awards and treasure, and establishing an effective atmosphere of mystery and suspense.

As stated in all the other guidelines, meeting deadlines is as important as writing a great event. Tournaments for first-run a particular convention must be submitted six months before the con. You can submit tournaments without a particular convention in mind, and then deadlines aren't an issue. Ultimately, even meeting the deadline doesn't guarantee that your event will be sanctioned. The bottom line is still quality, and in this respect, LIVING DEATH tournaments may be more challenging to write than any other sort. Simple, linear, combat-oriented adventures just don't capture the feeling of adventuring in Gothic Earth. LIVING DEATH adventures should be interesting, plot-driven, and sophisticated without being needlessly complex. These requirements don't eliminate the possibility of action, but writers should appeal to players' imaginations and minds before giving them a chance to shoot it out with the villains . . . or run screaming away from them.

The Submission Process

How to propose and submit your tournament is a subject often covered in these pages. In brief, then, the process consists of these steps:

Propose an Outline
Incorporate the Feedback
Submit the Final Draft
Brace Yourself for Revisions

Sometimes the LIVING DEATH coordinator will respond that your adventure idea won't work well, and he should give you some suggestions for other adventures. If your first idea is rejected outright, don't hesitate to try another one. It doesn't necessarily mean you haven't a good idea; it could simply be that someone else has submitted a similar idea, or it could be that you have proposed an adventure too ambitious for a three-hour tournament.

You may wish to write a stand-alone adventure, or you may prefer to link the events of your tournament to another. In these cases, you can submit an idea along with someone else's, describing how you'd like to link them. Alternately, you could simply write that you wouldn't mind adding some elements to your adventure which tie it to a previous tournament. An important goal of the LIVING DEATH campaign is to create a web of continuous and linked events throughout the adventure, making Gothic Earth a *living* setting.

Always be sure to enclose a Standard Disclosure Form (available from the TSR Online software libraries on America Online and GEnie, and from RPGA HQ, with a SASE). Expect responses to take 6–8 weeks.

Atmosphere

The LIVING DEATH setting is not nearly so finite as those of the LIVING CITY™ and LIVING JUNGLE™. Confined only to a planet, not a small region, the campaign can rove from the dusty streets of an American West ghost town to the glorious avenues of the Forbidden City in China. Characters may as soon don parkas and ride dog sleds across the arctic as climb the hot peaks of northern Africa. While the emphasis of the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set is upon North America, the LIVING DEATH setting is not confined to one country or continent. Thus, the atmosphere of adventures will vary widely depending upon the exact setting chosen.

However, LIVING DEATH adventures should all have some element of terror, regardless of the setting. The RAVENLOFT® boxed set gives extensive advice on establishing such an atmosphere, and LIVING DEATH writers are directed to that source.

Tone

Read the article by Greg Ferris in this issue for some tips on establishing a good tone for LIVING DEATH tournaments. In addition to his advice, note that all LIVING DEATH events should include some element of altruistic heroism (see Player Goals, below), but they need not always be strictly horror adventures. LIVING DEATH adventures can be wilderness adventures, mysteries, weird tales, gothic romances, and all variety of different styles. Ultimately, however, the threat of terrible supernatural forces is always at least a small part of a LIVING DEATH scenario.

Humor works wonderfully in most settings, but it is not appropriate for the tone of a LIVING DEATH tournament. This is not to say that comic relief isn't a terrific tool for setting up a horrific scene, or even for simply lightening the tone of an otherwise oppressive scenario. Use humor sparingly and with great care; don't let your frightening scenario become silly.

Player Goals

Player Characters (heroes) in the LIVING DEATH must all be of good alignment; the campaign is meant to be heroic, not gritty and dark. Inspire the players to perform heroic deeds by giving them heroic goals: rescue, defense, exploration, diplomacy, or similar activities that somehow thwart the forces of the Red Death. Don't lure the heroes only with the promise of tangible reward; give them the chance to accomplish something altruistic or selfless. This does not mean that PCs won't ever go on a safari, search for lost treasure, or compete for control of a site of magical power. But the main goal of each scenario should give the heroes a chance to show that they are heroes, not just fortune hunters.

Structure

For a more exhaustive summary of adventure structure, see issue #102 of the Newszine and the excellent *Complete Book of Villains*, by Kirk Botula, or (if you can find it at a hobby shop or convention, since it is out of print) *The Dungeon Master's Design Kit* by Harold Johnson and Aaron Allston. There are plenty of other good sources of advice

and inspiration available from TSR as well, including but not limited to *Creative Campaigning* and the *Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide.*

For the LIVING DEATH campaign, linear adventures should appear only very rarely. Mysteries and investigative adventures work much better as decision-tree or matrix adventures, giving the players real choices which lead them to their eventual success or failure.

Speaking of failure, more than in any other setting, LIVING DEATH heroes should *always* have a chance to fail. Don't put them in no-win situations from the very beginning, but be sure that the heroes must *earn* their success. It's a good idea to consider success and failure endings, as well as mixed results. (As when the heroes learn what they must face, but then realize they never discovered the means to defeat the enemy. "Run away!" should sometimes be the battle-cry of LIVING DEATH survivors.) The best LIVING DEATH tournaments will likely have not just one, nor even two, but three or more possible outcomes.

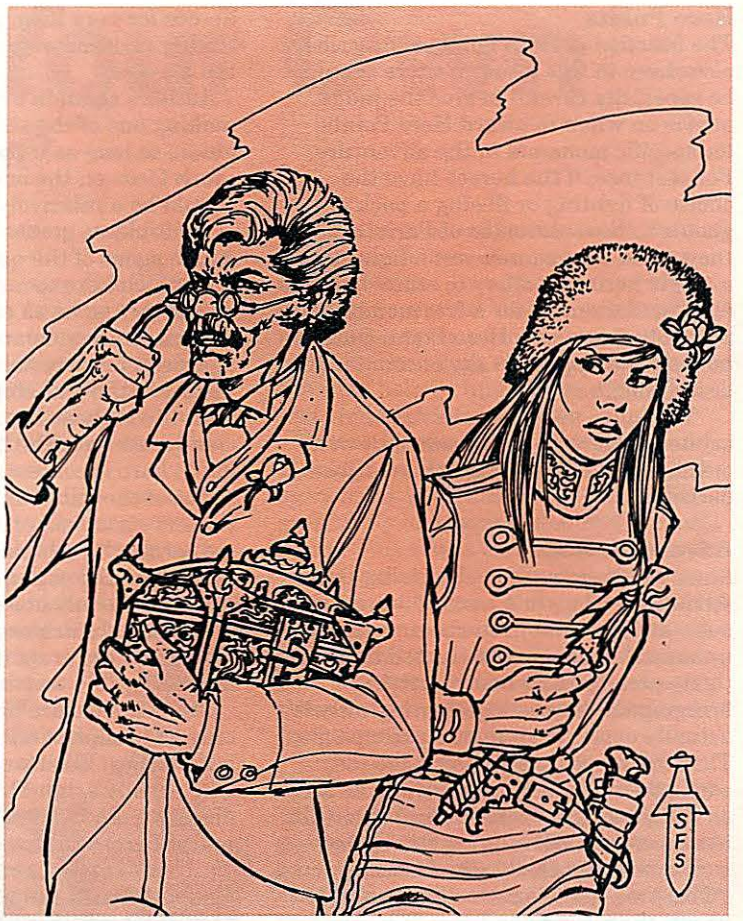
PC Levels

The LIVING DEATH campaign deals with characters of different levels just as does the Living Jungle setting. All LIVING DEATH tournaments must be written with a single level range in mind. There are three level ranges:

Low Level	1st-3rd
Mid-Level	4th-6th
High Level	7th-10th

Heroes of levels 1-3 may participate in a low level tournament, but characters of 4th level and above may not. Characters of 4th-6th level may play mid-level adventures, but characters of 7th level and above may not. Characters of *lower* level than the range indicated on the tournament may still play, but they run a very real risk of encountering obstacles too powerful to overcome with a lower level character. Judges should advise anyone planning to bring a 2nd level character into a mid-level tournament that it's a risk. But ultimately, being a hero is a dangerous profession, and the threat of character death must remain a real one if adventuring is to remain exciting.

Since LIVING DEATH scenarios are written for a range of character levels, encounters need not (and should not) be tiered for different groups of characters. Thus, a group of all 1st level characters will face the same threat in a tournament as would a group of all 3rd level characters. To anticipate this disparity and allow the lower level characters a fighting chance when facing dangerous foes, authors should include "troubleshooting" advice for a DM who faces the imminent demise of his PCs when they have played well and are simply outclassed by the opposition. Such advice can include the suggestion to lower the number of enemies the party faces (this option is best used in encounters which include many combative enemies, say, 20 giant rats), lowering the hit points of an opponent, reducing the damage die from a trap (converting a 3d6 damage trap to a 3d4 damage trap), and similar tactics. There's no concrete set of guidelines for producing such advice, but as the writer you should be sure to make your instructions simple and clear to the judge. The LIVING DEATH coordinator will help you with this sort of advice.



Experience Awards

As with the Living Jungle, LIVING DEATH experience awards are constant regardless of the total experience levels of the PC party. Don't bother with exact or even correct experience awards from the AD&D game rules. Give the party no more than 12 different experience awards, and keep all of them in units of 50. Limit individual xp awards (for example, an award for the first hero todecipher a puzzle) to only three or four instances in a tournament.

No single experience award should consist of more than 25% of the total experience available for the adventure. Furthermore, a good adventure is structured so that an average party will earn somewhere between 50% and 75% of the total experience available. Only very good adventuring groups should earn all possible experience awards.

No total experience award should exceed the high end of the following xp ranges:

Tournament Level	XP Award
Low	500-2,000
Mid	3,000-7,000
High	10,000-20,000

Note that the upper range of this chart is purposefully depressed (relative to experience needed to advance a level) than the lower range. This is an intentional device to prolong the adventuring careers of higher level adventurers while still allowing low level characters to advance relatively quickly into the middle range. Authors should never feel as though they must use the upper range of experience point awards simply to please the players; players will be best pleased with a good, enjoyable scenario which contributes to their long-term characters.

Hero Points
The function of Hero Points is described elsewhere in this issue. Writers should be especially careful to give the judge advice on when to award Hero Points for specific moments in the adventure. For instance, if the heroes have the choice of fighting or fleeing a pack of ghouls in the catacombs of Paris, and they think they cannot win a fight, then a single hero who offers to stand behind and "hold them off for a few moments" probably deserves a Hero Point. Such a note should appear in the encounter description.

The judge must remain the final arbiter of Hero Point awards, but writers should help the judge make a good decision.

Adventure Hooks
Since the premise of every Living Death scenario is that six agents of a mysterious—and, at least in the beginning, unnamed—qabal are contacted to investigate possible Red Death activity, bringing the heroes together logically is actually easier than in other campaigns. That the heroes may never have met each other before is a good thing as far as the qabal is concerned. And if certain heroes end up working together often, well that's also easily rationalized. ("These six make an excellent team; let us put them together again.")

The danger in this sort of conceit is that the adventure hook becomes predictable and dull. "Oh, a telegram. I suppose I'll be taking a train soon." To avoid too obvious a repetition, Living Death authors should consider both superficial variety and genuinely different tacks in bringing the heroes together. On the surface, a letter is slightly different from a telegram, which is slightly different from a message delivered with a bouquet of flowers, which is slightly different from a message whispered in a dark tavern.

Another way to vary the adventure hook is to use an NPC guide who visits each of the heroes and "collects" them before their journey. A good way to introduce historical or fictional characters into the campaign without running the risk of multiple Nicola Teslas or Harry Houdinis is to use them this way. Even when created from whole cloth, these guide NPCs should be fairly uncommon, since knowing the locations of six of the qabals agents makes them desirable targets for the agents of the Red Death. Also, of course, it is always a danger to allow an NPC to lead the heroes for very long, taking the responsibility of decision-making away from the players.

Authors shouldn't shy away from making one of the six characters be that guide, so long as it doesn't place too much focus on the one hero. Again, this should be a relatively uncommon hook, since it places great responsibility on a single agent of the qabal. Determining just which hero to make the "guide" character can be as easy as a random die roll or as calculated as checking against a predetermined quantity (for instance, the choosing the character with the highest Forbidden Lore proficiency). As with the NPC guide, this guide hero is contacted directly by an agent of the qabal and given the locations of six allies, placing the burden of gathering the others on his shoulders. As long as the action doesn't remained focussed on only one or a few heroes for very long, a quick accumulation from one character to six is an interesting and believable way to gather the forces.

These adventure hook strategies are only the simplest and most general approaches. Good writers will come up with wholly original methods to gather disparate and perhaps completely unfamiliar heroes to face a common foe.

Special Stuff
Magical items are very, very, very rare in the LIVING DEATH. But that's not to say the PCs can't find special treasures in some scenarios. More than ever before, magic and other special items must not appear in each and every adventure. Give the players different rewards: citations from government officials, the friendship of interesting NPCs, or heretofore hidden knowledge of Gothic Earth.

Don't include more than one permanent magical item in any tournament, and don't include any magical items at all in the first one you write. When you simply must include some cool artifact, substitute those magical items with treasures like these:

- A gold Egyptian burial mask
- The gratitude of an English lord, which may provide a bonus in a later event
- An open invitation to stay in a particularly fine hotel in Paris

In certain first-run events, writers can include unique treasures, objects which only one hero in the entire LIVING DEATH campaign will have. For instance, if in your LIVING DEATH adventure set in the American West, the heroes have an opportunity to discover an undead gunslinger's favorite pistol, describe it in generic terms. But also include with your submission a unique version of those pistols, perhaps the pistol which Wyatt Earp used at the OK Corral. *That's* the unique item, and the convention coordinators will determine which player gained the unique pistol by random drawing or player score (or a combination of both). In very special events, unique physical awards and props may also be included.

Let your imagination run free when designing similar treasures. Good choices might include a medallion once worn by Copernicus, an original score by Mozart—in the composer's own hand, the theatrical costume of a legendary Noh performer, an illuminated manuscript proving the existence of Arthur Pendragon . . . whatever cool thing your imagination can devise. These unique items don't need to be magical to be special and valuable. Keep in mind that treasures lose much of their mystique when they become too common or too numbers-oriented. Let every object tell a story, or at least hint at one.

As Always . . .
The Living Campaigns are aptly named. They are ever-changing structures that depend on your participation as a player, judge, or writer. We at Network HQ need your opinions and criticism about the settings. We sure don't mind the occasional pat on the back, either. If you have advice, complaints, suggestions, compliments, questions, or any sort of input about the settings, don't hesitate to write to the Network office:

RPGA Network
Living _____ Setting
201 Sheridan Springs Road
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Or send electronic mail to:

GEnie:
TSR.RPGA@GENIE.GEIS.COM
AOL: RPGAHQ@AOL.COM

❑

A World of Your Own

Just How Weird Can a World Get?

by Roger E. Moore

In the last issue of POLYHEDRON® Newszine, we talked about the creation and refereeing of original AD&D® campaign worlds. This time, let's invent two original campaigns based on "spin-off" worlds, ones only briefly mentioned in previous AD&D products.

Camelot—With Rings & Elves

Caroline is a big fan of the classical elements of fantasy: elves, dragons, wizards, knights, castles, and so on. She especially likes elves, and for weeks now she's been tinkering with an alternate AD&D campaign set on a world largely populated by elves—with no humans at all. While thumbing through a friend's copy of the SPELLJAMMER® accessory SJR4 *Practical Planetology*, she read about the ringed world known as Bodi, on pages 16-18. She hated the name Bodi, prefering to use Albarin, but she liked the set-up for Bodi otherwise and quickly adopted it into her campaign notes.

Albarin (Bodi to outsiders only!) is a small green world that was settled by spelljamming elves 20,000 years ago. The world is almost completely forested, with a rich and diverse ecology, and it is as close to paradise as elves could hope for. Tragically, the elves have lost nearly all the secrets of magic they once held. They have also lost contact with their gods, and so have no priests among them. Tasloi and green dragons are the only other sentient races present, both hostile to the elves and each other.

Modifications: Caroline wants elven kingdoms, not tribes. Her knowledge of Arthurian legend, especially in Chaosium's *Pendragon* game, leads her to design an elven Camelot named Valona (an anagram of Avalon). A powerful elven warrior wants to unite the scattered elves of his world under his rule, to protect them from the savage tasloi migrating northward from the equatorial jungles. To do this, he invents an order of knighthood, bringing law into the lives of the elves, and orders the construction of a hilltop castle where the elves might find safety even from dragons.

For flora and fauna, Caroline decides that at whim she can add many new nonmagical creatures, as well as variations on standard creatures (such as talking cats). She adds dryads to the world, but makes them naturally invisible. Undead and goblinlike humanoids are completely unknown.

Caroline decides to disallow the use of smoke powder and gunpowder on this world; it spoils the playing atmosphere of the game, so local laws of alchemy prevent it. Also, though she dislikes psionics, she allows outside characters to use their psionic powers; no native creatures will have them.

Initial Quest: The PCs for the Albarin campaign will come in from another world, and might eventually leave for elsewhere and return later. How and why will they go to Albarin? What will the PCs do when they get there? The players dislike the long travel times involved in spelljamming, so cross-world travel will have to be by an instantaneous magical gate or spell. And the thing that will lead the group to Albarin will be . . . a priest.

An elven goddess named Rhiannon (Caroline decides) knows about Albarin. Many books recording the lost magical knowledge of the elves were stolen and hidden long ago in a deep cave by a green dragon, who hoped to use their spells. The books were believed lost forever—except by Rhiannon, who wants them back in elven hands.

The PCs' first mission to Albarin, then, is to head down into that cave and recover those lost texts. The books will let elven wizards of the world gain levels according to standard AD&D rules; they were previously limited to the 4th level after a lifetime of magical study! These books are critical to Valona's future, and the trip to get them will be dangerous. (The green dragon is now an undead monster similar to a FORGOTTEN REALMS® dracolich.)

Caroline creates a low-level elven wizard-priest who receives dreams instructing her to gather heroes (the PCs) and proceed to a hidden glade, where the NPC must cast a spell (teleport without error) from a scroll she had previously found. The spell will carry the elf and the group to Albarin, where the group can find Valona. After the local elves get used to their strange visitors, the hero-king of Valona asks for the PCs' help in finding the magical texts of legend.

Obviously, the wizard-priest is a Maguffin, a plot device used to move the story along. The incautious NPC will eventually be lost or killed at Caroline's whim. This forces the PCs to recover the volumes themselves, sparing them the indignity of tagging along after a minor NPC. Before she dies, however, the wizard-priest brings knowledge of the goddess Rhiannon to the elves, granting them the power to become priests and further ensure their survival.

Future adventures could include the discovery of the dryads and their secret culture, attacks by evil spelljamming groups, quests against the dragons, and battles with the tasloi. There might be strife among the elves if some prefer the hunter/gatherer life or hope to set up their own kingdoms. Other races might be present on Albarin, unknown to all but themselves. Perhaps some dragons will even make peace with the elves. Who knows?

Players' Viewpoint: Caroline wants Albarin to look, smell, sound, and feel like the most wonderful forested wilderness ever. The leaves are greener, the sky bluer, and the water clearer than on any other world. She emphasizes this using descriptions given to the players: "You look out over a great green meadow, wet with morning dew and sewn with a riot of purple and orange flowers. An armada of brilliant yellow butterflies floats above the long grass, as silent tendrils of fog enshroud the trees."

Albarin, however, has other special characteristics drawn from the original description of Bodi. First, its small size means the horizon appears closer to the viewer than it would on an Earth-size world. Even if the PCs never know Albarin's diameter (2,500 miles), they'll soon figure out that this world is much smaller than usual.

Second and more importantly, Albarin

has a ring around it, like the rings of Saturn. Caroline sits down with paper, pencil, ruler, compass, and her imagination to figure out what the ring will look like from different points on Albarin's surface, at different times of the day and night, and during different seasons.

She decides that, like Saturn's rings, Albarin's ring is tilted to the plane of the world's orbit, and the ring faces the same direction in the celestial sphere no matter where the world is in its orbit. At some times of the year the ring appears brightly lit; at other times the ring is darker, lit from behind by the sun. The elves of Valona poetically call the ring the Skybridge, the Arch of Glory, or the Crystal Rainbow.

Experiments with a flashlight and a paper-and-rubber-ball model of Albarin also gives Caroline ideas on the ring's appearance from the world's surface. She goes so far as to design a calendar for the world based upon the ring's appearance during the seasons.

Speaking of calendars, Caroline decides that Albarin has a year much longer than Earth's—20 times longer, in fact. She keeps the day length given for Bodi in *Practical Planetology*—18 hours—though the local elves pay little attention to the time since they never sleep, using instead the guidelines for the reverie in *The Complete Book of Elves*. Non-elves from other worlds will find the short days and nights irritating, never feeling they get enough sleep before the sun rises or enough accomplished before the sun sets.

Resources: For her campaign, Caroline plans to make use of books on Arthurian legends, the *Pendragon* game, the GURPS *Camelot* book, the AD&D game's HR3 *Celts* Campaign Sourcebook, Robin Hood movies, notes on the elves of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, English faerie legends, and DRAGON® Magazine articles on elves (especially issue #155's article on the elven goddess Rhiannon, modified for this campaign). The AD&D *Complete Book of Elves* is also greatly used.

Caroline borrowed the idea of introducing true priests to Albarin from TSR's DRAGONLANCE® saga, and might later borrow ideas for running complex green-dragon NPCs from the COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ boxed set or the *Draconomicon*.

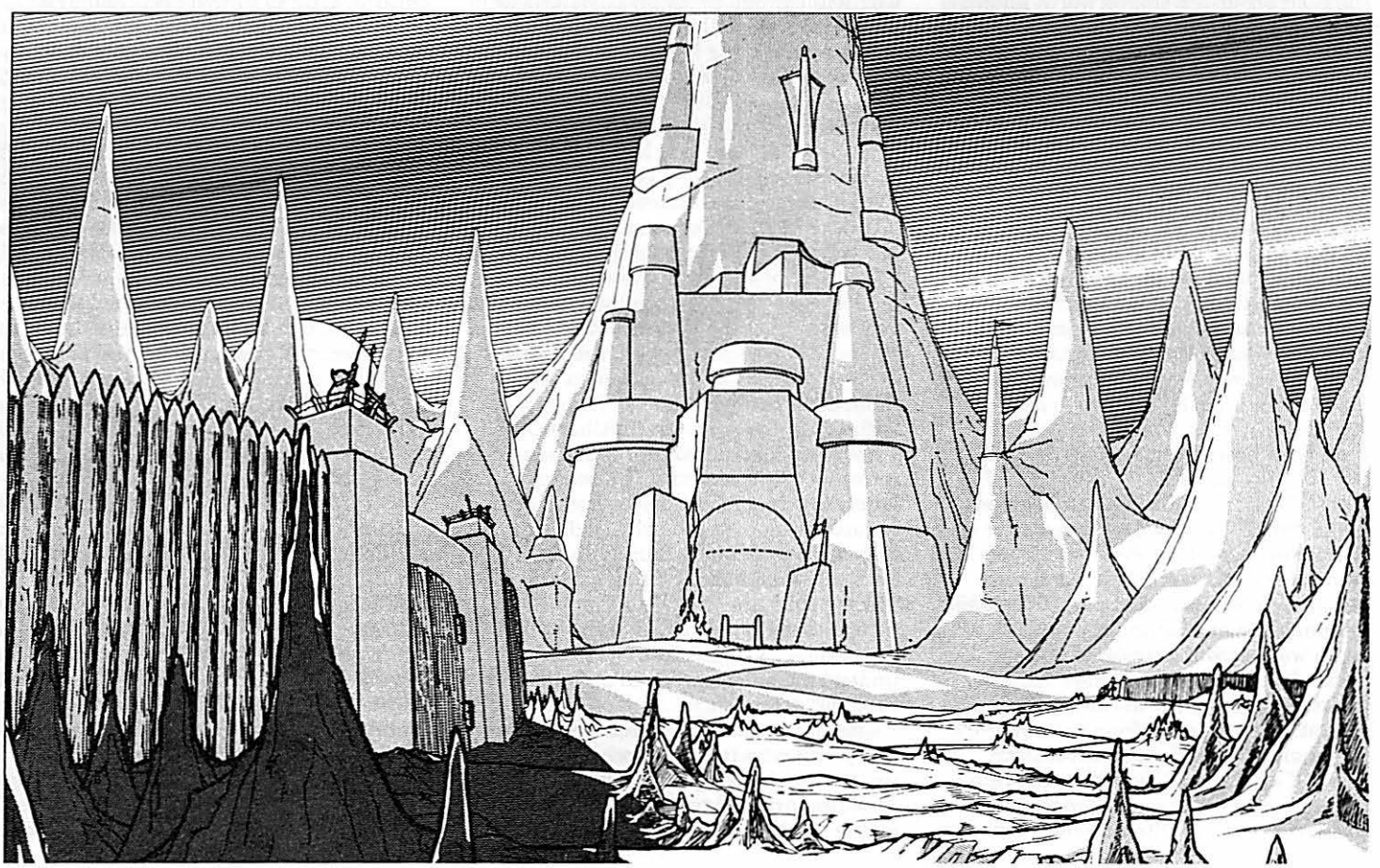
Kingdoms Under Siege

Mike and his friends like AD&D campaigns featuring warfare, combat, feats of derring-do, powerful heroes, and outnumbered forces of Good triumphing against brutal forces of Evil.

Mike, a long-time gamer, is starting a new campaign based upon a spin-off world from an old, out-of-print AD&D module, Q1 *Queen of the Demonweb Pits*. The unnamed world appeared on page 17, with five paragraphs of text and an illustration that stuck in Mike's mind for years. (It is reproduced here.)

The world, which Mike later named Moraad (moh-RAHD), was one of many being invaded by chaotic-evil monsters commanded by the evil drow-goddess Lolth. In module Q1, the last kingdom of mountain dwarves, Maldev, is under attack by thousands of gnolls, bugbears, and other beasts. Kandelspire, the castle-gate to Maldev, is the point where the heroes enter the world to challenge Lolth's armies. In Mike's campaign, however, the players can either generate local high-level heroes or bring in PCs from other campaigns.

Modifications: Maldev's world was so



briefly described in Q1 that Mike makes no changes to its description. He fleshes out the world considerably, though, to support a long-term campaign there.

Moraad (as Mike works it out) is an Earth-sized world with no moons. It has dozens of irregularly shaped seas that fill the huge valleys between its many mountain ranges. Mountains on Moraad are spikey in appearance, very thin and sharply pointed; mountain building occurs through the growth of crystalline rock, not plate tectonics, with a spike mountain growing as much as an inch every year. This "living rock" looks something like granite and is just as strong. It makes great building material, as it stops growing once it has been cut from the earth and polished.

Moraad has a 25-hour day, a white sun, and a purple-blue sky. The "stars" (here called asters) look like small moons, each as large in the sky as a thumbnail at arm's length. Asters drift slowly and randomly across the sky, giving off steady light equal to a full Moon. A year here is 500 Moraadian days long.

Until 20 years ago, Moraad was like other AD&D worlds such as Oerth, Krynn, or Toril. Then it was discovered by Lolth, who saw that the world had a large number of gnolls, bugbears, and other chaotic-evil monsters. She dispatched drow agents to lead those monsters against the humans and demihumans in a great war.

All elven and most human nations have now been conquered; only a dozen kingdoms on a large peninsula survive, thanks to a nearly impassable mountain range cutting them off from the rest of the world. (The gnolls are lousy sailors, so a sea invasion is not forthcoming.) Maldev is a large dwarven kingdom sitting astride the only pass into this region, called Far Hergis. If Maldev falls, so will Far Hergis and the rest of civilization on Moraad.

Elves are almost unknown here; most were exterminated by Lolth's armies. Humans, halflings, gnomes, and dwarves are common in Far Hergis, and firbolg giant-kin are present and may be used as PCs. Rangers and paladins are surprisingly common, thanks to the war. Reincarnated humans come back as werebears (since this world's creator was a bear-god) and can be PCs. In fact, adult bears on this world have some intelligence and can even talk.

The orcs of Moraad were the only humanoids who did not follow Lolth. These orcs are neutral and not the enemies of dwarves, though they are barbaric and warlike; all of their kingdoms have now been destroyed. Orcs and half-orcs are allowed as PCs.

Psionics are allowed in this campaign though not commonly seen. Magic is plentiful but swiftly destroyed in combat. There is no gunpowder; smoke powder can be made but is rare. Spelljamming is as yet unknown, but interplanar travel has occasionally been used by wizards and priests. Engineering and construction skills are highly advanced, especially among humans and dwarves. Gnolls, on the other hand, are barbaric and short-sighted, destroying much.

Initial Quest: As players in Mike's group love playing powerful PCs, Mike specifically designed his Moraad campaign as a high-level one, using the guidelines set down in the DUNGEON MASTER® Option: *High-Level Campaigns* book. The initial quest for heroes here is to defend Maldev and destroy Lolth's forces at Kandelspire. Following that, the group must locate the gate from which Lolth is commanding her forces, then destroy it. (Killing Lolth is not possible; she is too powerful.) Then it is a matter of attacking and destroying far-flung armies of evil, locating other surviving pockets of civilization, and reconquering fallen lands.

Mike allows native PCs to be generated at 8th level, making them refugees from lost kingdoms attempting to reach Far Hergis and make a last stand there. To add role-playing elements, he works with native-PC players on their families, histories, allies, enemies, abilities, and special knowledge of the world. PCs arriving from other worlds (summoned by various lures promising great adventure or treasure) will soon be worked into the tapestry here as they set their own goals and find them blocked by Lolth's forces.

Players' Viewpoint: The spike mountains, the purplish sky, the white sun, the lack of a moon, and the asters will quickly set this world off from all others at a quick look. More remarkable will be the shockingly ravaged condition of the lands conquered by Lolth's forces, who have enslaved or murdered whole populations, burned forests and fields, stolen anything of value, and ruined everything that they couldn't cart away.

What will catch the players' attention in the long run, Mike hopes, is the constant challenge the campaign provides. Mike plays the gnolls and other evil beings of this world to be wickedly clever. The gnolls use sophisticated traps, ambushes, and tactics. They throw dirt in opponents' eyes, hurl flaming bottles of oil, use poison on their blades, fire burning arrows into wooden towns, practice crude martial arts (punching, kicking, wrestling), and employ minor magical items like potions or wands. It will be a nasty, dirty campaign, but a very exciting one.

Resources: Mike uses many Complete Handbooks in his campaign, especially those on fighters, thieves, wizards, priests, rangers, paladins, psionics, druids, and gnomes and halflings. The *Complete Book of Humanoids* is used for orc, half-orc, and firbolg giant-kin PCs, and for gnoll, bugbear, and ogre NPCs. Of the DMGR series, *Monster Mythology* provides updated details on Lolth and her cult, and *The Complete Book of Villains* is invaluable for NPC creation. The *Tome of Magic*'s new spells are available to the PCs, and Mike uses his four ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™ volumes for treasure hoards.

Far Hergis is European in nature, and Mike uses three of the green AD&D Historical Reference books to describe the nations there: HR1 *Vikings*, HR2 *Charlemagne's Paladins*, and HR3 *Celts*. Orcs are culturally like Goths or Vandals. Firbolgs are Celtic; dwarves are Norse; halflings are Frankish; gnomes are Bavarian. Humans are found everywhere. Mike doesn't use the special rules for magic in the HR series; he prefers faster-moving "normal" spellcasting. Ruins and dungeons are plentiful in Lolth's lands, and Mike adapts modules from DUNGEON® Adventures to fill the bill.

The heavy emphasis on detailed, individual combat encourages the use of the PLAYER'S OPTION™: *Combat & Tactics* book. For massive battles between armies, Mike uses the BATTLESYSTEM® 2nd Edition rules with cardboard counters, played out on a tabletop or floor.

The quest to destroy Lolth's gate here was inspired by similar events in the original DRAGONLANCE campaign (destroying Takhisis's gate at Neraka). Gnollish dirty tricks were inspired by magazine articles on ways to make monsters more effective ("killer kobolds").

Next month, more original campaigns—and a look at how they are pieced together.

Virtuosity

Refereeing and Writing Guidelines for the Virtual Seattle Setting

by Ron Heintz

Several months ago, in Issue 107 of the Newszine, we ran the Network's guidelines for playing in the Virtual Seattle campaign setting. In this issue, we add to those guidelines by offering some tips on refereeing and writing VS tournaments.

Refereeing Virtual Seattle

Virtual Seattle scenarios have a certain flavor. To achieve that tone, and to help you out with some of the Network requirements, here are some helpful suggestions.

Tournament Play and the Dreaded Clock

Referees should be familiar with the scenario, have all props, NPC tracking sheets, etc. ready and be available at least 10 minutes before their slot, or as the tournament/gaming coordinator requires. When you have only 4 hours, it helps to be organized.

Your 4 hours of time should break down more or less as follows:

1) When you're all together, have the players write the scenario name in pen on the back of their Virtual Seattle PC sheet. Have the players fill out the top of their RPGA® Network scoring package and make up a name card while you're setting up. Have them give a *brief* physical-and-obvious-trait description of their characters (no more than a minute each).

2) Give some poor volunteer the job of keeping track of the Team Karma Pool. It is equal in total value to the number of players, usually 6. It *may not* be added to. Team Karma is used as described in the *Shadowrun II* rules.

3) Each player must deduct one month's Lifestyle cost at the level desired, or go to Street Lifestyle for this adventure.

4) Play the scenario. Because of the necessity of scoring, awarding Karma, fencing/awarding equipment and handling downtime purchases, you *must* end the scenario with at least 20 minutes to spare. If your group started late, sorry. The only alternative is to assume that no-one buys anything or upgrades any cyberware between scenarios, to save that time block. They won't want to do that.

5) Vote for the awards. Have the players do a 1-minute role-play "hook" description of their characters. They do their voting; you do yours.

6) Award Team Karma, as per scenario guidelines and Individual Karma (maximum of 3 per player) as per roleplaying. Players will have to decide how much to spend on their character improvements (skills, attributes, etc.) and how much to save. This is done on the honour system so don't feel obligated to babysit them. Initial the game tracking sheet by the scenario name and karma award.

7) Material awards, as per scenario description. This is explained in the 'Improving Your Character' section. Let Players buy their item through Claudia, if they want.

8) Go home. No, really, that's it.

The Mythical Game Balance

The spirit of Virtual Seattle is that player characters should start out relatively "weak" by number-cruncher standards, but be able to survive the scenarios by dint of clever play and cooperation. The opportunity to roleplay and have fun is more important than firefight victories or scenario completion.

So, if the players only complete half the scenario but have, in your estimation, done a great job and kept well to the shadows, feel free to award them the lion's share of the Team Karma (even if the scenario requires the completion of a major task which has been left unfinished). But don't shovel Karma out for no reason.

On the other hand, if the group is a bunch of unrepentent, kamikaze doughheads, feel free to nuke them, maybe letting any better individuals have a chance to run for it.

The point is that the Team should have to genuinely strive, but should not be fried just because of a few lousy dice rolls. You can even blow off an arm instead of accepting an unlucky "kill" result, or fudge it away if reasonable. (Heck, half the samurai'll be chopping their own arms off as soon as nuyen allow, anyway.) However, we do use the Permanent Damage rules for Deadly wounds (SRII pp. 113-114). This does not refer to several wounds which add up to Deadly; it governs single wounds of Deadly level.

Oh, yes: one last "balance" thing. Please check if any Metahumans have allergies and take them into account. They're not supposed to be sources of freebie points.

Extra Cookies

Scenarios have a habit of growing in the telling and players can be quite ingenious at garnering extra loot, contacts and so forth. Let the quality of roleplaying and ingenuity be your guide if sallying forth past scenario guidelines, but absolutely keep "extras" to a maximum bonus of 100,000 nuyen in "stuff" (TOTAL for the whole group) and one extra contact apiece, beyond the scenario specs. Remember that Claudia Tyger gets her cut of all loot, unless the scenario specifies otherwise.

Pseudoreality

Try to keep a consistent sense of "pseudoreality" about things like NPC reactions and law level. Heavily-cybered people are *rare*; magicians/shamans are rarer still. Lone Star/Knight Errant/Corp Cops will take them down, quickly and cleanly if possible. Also, the Team are supposed to be *shadowrunners*, not Public Enemy numbers One through Six. Contacts can be lost as well as gained, as can equipment (and cyberarms, if you have to get *really* nasty).

What To Do About Psychotics

Oh, yeah. "But, honest, the way I roleplay him, he just always kills everyone...". Some suggestions, in order of clout:

1) Slap his fingers by having people with guns respond quickly. Have contacts stand him up because he's too hot. Increase the Lone Star presence in areas he's been seen.

2) Take away his toys by having attack squads of appropriate enforcement catch him, beat him silly and take

his guns. Try to come up with a good excuse not to have them simply kill him.

3) Last Resort: kill him, or remove him from the team. This is not recommended as it can really upset a player. But if the player won't roleplay a team player, in a team player situation, then they're not roleplaying. Nah, be fair: kill him.

Writers' Guidelines

To help you capture the feel of a good "dark future" scenario, here are a few tips to consider before you put pen to paper (or fingertips to keyboard).

Time It
Scenarios should be constructed so that a good team can finish the entire scenario within 3 1/2 hours and a unlucky or inexperienced team should be able to complete about 75% of the mission. If the team is stupid and bickering they'll be lucky to survive, let alone complete and profit.

"Claudia Tyger", the Team's Patron/Fixer/primary Decker, will often be used to set mission parameters and provide Decker-type support, but should not provide strategy once the run begins. Also, Claudia does not physically accompany the Characters. Don't worry about a template for Claudia; she's as good as she needs to be.

The other half hour of the presumed 4 hour slot will be needed for scoring and between-scenario updates of the characters.

Gauge It
The team should have a good chance of survival if they perform well. Auto-kill situations and ones where a character's life, or those of the team, depend on one lucky roll should be avoided, Karma notwithstanding. Only if a situation is written in for the purposes of drama and it looks terminal, but includes an out, should it be included. On the flipside, beware of "cavalry charges", high-powered NPCs and other items that will detract from the players' enjoyment. They should feel as though they legitimately triumphed against tough odds amid the usual hose job/web of betrayal. This is *Shadowrun*, after all.

Unlike games that use "levels," it is hard to determine the level of threat appropriate to a scenario which could be played by novices and masters alike. This will be mainly up to the editors (us) to watch out for and the Refs to mediate. However, common sense dictates that 99% of ordinary bystanders, gangers, thugs, low-level sararimen and even gunsels are not going to have a half million nuyen worth of cybermods and spells. Please let a sense of "dark future normalcy" guide you. Players should also have ample opportunity to think their way through a scenario.

Style It
We'd suggest the RPGA Network format published periodically in the Newszine. The format includes 6 encounters made up of 2 combat, 1 negotiation, 1 ambush/trap, 1 obstacle or problem-solving situation and 1 choice. An encounter may be very short or combined with another into a longer encounter, like a negotiation that breaks down. Try to save the biggest and most complicated encounter for the climax at the end of the scenario.

Encounter descriptions a la FASA's *Shadowrun* module style ("Tell It To Them Straight", "Debugging", etc.) would be nice.Who knows, you may interest FASA in your abilities some day. This format is not required, but it may help make the scenario more clear to the referee.

Your scenario *must* be typed! You may also submit it on 3 inch floppy disk,

in regular density, as Word Perfect 5.0 or ASCII files. We'll try to get the disk back to you, but we cannot guarantee when. So keep a copy!

Cast It

If your scenario absolutely requires a type of skill (e.g. Rigging or Decking), state it early in the introduction. Also, try to have something for everyone in a team to do. We will be warning players not to overspecialise their PCs. Remember that the Team can call upon Claudia Tyger's formidable (though unspecified) Decker talents. Have her go only so far and then have the team do the rest (or why does she need them)? Leave combat-decking (on-site) to a player. Please don't make combat-decking essential to the scenario; not every team will have one.

Please include as many specifics about NPCs as possible, including threat and professional ratings, equipment, and other information. A simple thing like adding drain and damage information can help speed up play. Adding recoil and such is even nicer. Check out our own scenario, "A Matter of Reputation", for a rather wordy example.

End It

Karma awards are as usual. Team Karma should be around six to nine. Refs will be adding up to three more points for individual playing. Most referees will appreciate any suggestions by you, the author, about how to award Team and/or Individual Karma.

Gear and cash shouldn't exceed 100,000 nuyen per character total net value (after fencing). We'd like PCs to progress at a slow, but reasonable, rate. Again, judges will have guidelines to mediate huge hauls due to player cleverness. The exception here would be utility items (a freebie pocket comp, wrist 'phone, simsense player, etc.) and consumables (*small amounts* of ammo, expendable fetishes, patches, cheaper chipware, etc.). Any major items like Foci, Heavy Weapons, Helicopters, Nightskys, etc. should be part of the total maximum of 100,000 nuyen per character. Spread loot among the interests of a variety of Archetypes, if possible. Everyone loves nuyen. Claudia Tyger will get a share of most windfalls, but no more than the player characters, since she does not accompany them on the runs.

Typically, the PCs will be drawn into a scenario for little or no cash, but will find windfalls en route. Or, the PCs can contract a mission for decent nuyen (up to 50,000 to 80,000 each), but will acquire far less loot. Offering split fees or bonuses based on performance is fine and can be used to encourage tactics other than "okay, we kill everyone". Claudia usually starts them with a done deal; let them know of opportunities to negotiate during the run.

You may also have the employer offer mods/equipment/spell formulae, or other barter, instead of cash. The value should follow the guidelines mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

Contacts also make dandy rewards. Please limit yourself to only 1 or 2 new contacts available to each PC. Also, please include criteria for the person to become a contact. For example, does the PC have to save their life, be generous, have a Charisma of 5+, or what? Also, please describe which Contact Type they are, if it is not obvious.

Address for Submissions:

Ron and Margaret Heintz,
GEnie Mailbox: Rheintz.1
279 9th Street,
Hanover, ON, Canada, N4N 1L3

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Conventions

Adventure Gamefest '5, October 20-22 Portland OR — Tournament, competition and open play of role playing, card games, miniatures and board games of all genres, including fantasy, historic and science fiction. Event prizes, game auction, miniature painting contest. Pre-registration: $18/3 days, $15/2 days, $10/day. Oregon Convention Center, 777 Martin Luther King Blvd., Portland OR. Contact: Adventure Games Northwest, LLC, 6517 NE Alberta, Portland OR 97218, (503)-282-6856 or (360)-887-4479. email DEBS85D@prodigy.com.

Sibcon '95, Oct 28, Butler PA — The Circle of Swords Gaming Guild is sponsoring a one day game convention, held at the Days Inn Conference Center in Butler PA. Scheduled events will include RPGA Network tournaments including LIVING CITY and Benefit tournaments, board games, miniature events, free form role-playing events, and other role-playing events. We will also have a dealers' area, new game demonstrations and other special events. Registration is $5 until October 14 and $7 thereafter and at the door. For details, send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, PO Box 2126, Butler PA 16003.

ShaunCon XI, Nov 3–5, Kansas City MO—New date and location! This convention will be held at the Park Place Hotel in Kansas City MO. Special guests include representatives from White Wolf, Mayfair, Wizards of the Coast, and TSR Inc. Events include role playing, board, card, and miniatures games with RPGA Network games, *Magic: the Gathering*, and *Puffing Billy*. Other activities include an art show, a video room, dealers, and the 1995 Midwest region Feature Finals. Contact: ShaunCon XI, PO Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116–0157; email ShaunCon@aol.com.

Gold Con, Nov 4, Clark NJ—Located at the American Legion Hall in Clark NJ, Gold Con will feature RPGA Network sanctioned Living City events, a Duelist Convocation sponsored *Magic: the Gathering* tournament, Games Workshop supported games, as well as AD&D, *Space Hulk* and *Circus Maximus*. Preregistration costs $8 and registration at the door costs $10. Write to A U Gamers, PO Box 493, Budd Lake NJ, 07828 or call Steven at (201) 347 2351.

Rock–Con XXIII, Nov 4–5, Rockford IL—Held at the Rockford Lutheran High School on 3411 N. Alpine Rd in Rockford. This year's con will again be host to a very special event: the 5th annual Megaintergalactic Empire Builder Championship Tournament, sponsored by Mayfair Games and Black Hawk Hobby Distributors. Other events include games from Avalon Hill, ICE, White Wolf, FASA, TSR including RPGA Network events), Mayfair, GDW, and others. There will also be the annual Rock–Con auction, and there will be a dealers room as well. For preregistration or information, write: Rock–Con XXIII, 14225 Hansberry Rd, Rockton IL 61072.

Santa Con, Dec 9, Honolulu HI—this convention will be held at the Kaala Rec Center at Schofield Barracks. This benefit event will donate the proceeds to Toys for Tots. Events include RPGA Network events, card games, and much more. For more information, write to: Eric Kline, PO Box 90182, Honolulu HI 96835–0182.

SunQuest `96, Jan 5–7, 1996, Orlando FL—Located at the .Sheraton Plaza Hotel at The Florida Mall, this con will feature RPGA Network sanctioned and independent role playing events, naval and fantasy miniatures, *Magic: the Gathering* and other card games, Florida's first *Puffing Billy* railroad tournaments, an art show/auction, and special charity events. Guests include Jean Rabe, Tom Prusa, Jackie Cassada, Nicky Rea, Darwin and Peter Bromley, and artist Ruth Thompson. Preregistration $20, onsite registration $30. For more information, write to SunQuest `96, PO Box 677069, Orlando FL, 32867–7069. Email on GEnie: T.REED10, AOL: RFarns, CompuServe: 72337,234. For hotel reservations, call 1 (800) 231 7883 (specify SunQuest).

ATCON, Jan 26–28, Austin TX—A fantastic mix of role–playing, card games, and strategic games, held at the Ramada Inn on Ben White in Austin. There will be RPGA® Network events, and our special guests will be Jean and Bruce Rabe. We will also have a benefit auction for the Faith home. The cost for preregistration is $15, or $12 for GOAT or Network members. For more information, contact Gamers of Austin Texas (GOAT), 3816 South Lamar #2019, Austin TX 78704, or call (512) 867 3821.

Total Confusion X `96, Feb 22–25, 1996, Marlboro MA—We have expanded our timetable and events! Events will include: the AD&D game *Assault, Axis & Allies, Battletech, Call of Cthulhu, Car Wars, Champions, DC Heroes, Diplomacy GURPS, Jyhad, Magic: the Gathering, Paranoia, Railroad, Risk, Shadowrun, Space Hulk, Star Fleet Battles, Vampire,* and *Werewolf.* There will be over 200 scheduled games, a miniatures painting contest, and a dinner theater production. Preregistration costs $10 per day or $30 for all four days; registration at the door costs $12 per day. For more information, contact Total Confusion, PO Box 604, North Oxford MA 01537 or call (508) 987–5244.

Concentric, Mar 7–10, Park Ridge IL— Concentric 1996 is planning a huge LIVING CITY™ Interactive event for this year's con. We need LIVING CITY players with businesses, or Network members who want to create and run an LC business, to come and run your business during our Interactive event. People running businesses will be involved in plots and will be able to gain experience points along with other players. We already have a magic item dealer and are especially interested in having a tavern and a temple. Please contact us at (312) 409 2943 and leave a message, or write to Michael Schneider/Concentric, 114 Euclid Ave, Box 287, Park Ridge IL 60068.

Classifieds

WANTED: Help! I need FRE2 *Tantras* (the module) and FR4 *The Magister* in any condition. I can pay 10$ for each. If you want to sell them please quickly write to: Muhammed Dabiri, Iskele Yolu Sok, 14/6, 81070 Suadiye, Istanbul, Turkey.

WANTED: From the 1993 rare card set (#'s 1-60) cards #20, 21, 22 and 24. I am willing to pay good prices for these cards provided they are in mint condition, or will trade any of the following rare cards for the above: #1, 17, 18, 38, 39, 40, 42. Contact Conrad Geist, 1137 E. Gateway Ave., Ft. Morgan, CO 80701-3916.

WANTED: *City System* and *Karu-Tur* boxed sets for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. Also modules H1-4, I13, TM4 *Waterdeep Trail Map* and DUNGEON® Adventures #2-4. I'm willing to pay good prices for items in excellent to mint condition. Send price list to Conrad Geist, 1137 E. Gateway Ave., Ft. Morgan, CO 80701-3916.

KANSAS: 12 year old GM seeking players in Shawnee Mission area for AD&D and *Star Wars* games. Please, no GMs or DMs. I use the MYSTARA® setting. AD&D players must be familiar with *Player's Handbook*. Also interested in trading *Magic: the Gathering* cards. Write to: John Smith, 4119 Prairie Lane, Prairie Village, KS 66208 or call at 831-1288.

OREGON: I'm a 20 year old player/DM who has just recently moved to Salem. I'm interested in meeting a mature group of gamers who are 18 or older. I am familiar with the FORGOTTEN REALMS, RAVENLOFT®, *Palladium* RPG and *Heroes Unlimited* settings and games. You can contact Ryan at 463-4833.

MAINE: Where is everybody? I'm 26 and looking for fresh blood to a small gaming group. Any ages welcome. We're looking for DMs and players for *Battletech*, AD&D and *Shadowrun*. Are you up to the challenge? For more information write to Scot DuFour at 33 Ridgeland Ave., South Portland, ME 04106 or call 207-799-5606.

LEGENDS, the first and only *Earthdawn* APA is entering its second year and we're looking for new members. If you've got ideas, stories, articles or just an opinion about *Earthdawn* and would like to share your writing with others, send a SASE for more information to: Richard Tomasso, P. O. Box 1672, Merrimack, NH 03054-1672.

TRADING CARDS WANTED: I am looking for anyone interested in trading SPELLFIRE® cards. Especially RAVENLOFT 9, 44, 49, 67 (1st Edition) and Promo Card 2. Who wants to get my spare Promo card 1? Also looking for a pen pal, female or male. Write: Joern Wessels, Im gruenen Winkel 25, 32760 Detmold, Germany.

FOR SALE: Dragon back issues for $5 each plus postage, box of 100 mixed common and uncommon SPELLFIRE cards - guaranteed no duplicates per 100 $5 plus postage. Other stuff available. Please write: James C. Alpeter, Jr., P. O. Box 143, Syracuse, NY 13206-0143. Advance thanks to all who write. Please enclose a business sized SASE so as to receive a reply.

TRADE: Looking for the following SPELLFIRE cards to fill out my own sets and I have many cards for trade in return and will trade for a 1 to 1 basis, rare for rare, etc. All cards are out of 100 RAVENLOFT set: 43, 67, 76(x2), 83, 86, 99. DRAGONLANCE set: 15, 17, 67, 97, 99. FORGOTTEN REALMS set: 10, 69. All cards should be in unplayed condition (nice and stiff). Please write James C. Alpeter, Jr. P. O. Box 143, Syracuse, NY 13206-0143. Advance thanks to all who write.

VIRGINIA: Looking for new members for established 1st Edition AD&D game. No DMs. If interested please contact Tom Rainey at 804-838-5195 after 6 PM EST. Also looking to buy D&D and AD&D products in fair or better condition. Send list to: 99 Tidemill Lane, Apt 132, Hampton, VA 23666.

FLORIDA: I am a 28 year old player wishing to join an AD&D 2nd Edition game group, before I die of role-playing deprivation. I've been playing on and off for 13 years. I can play up to once per week (prefer weekends) and can travel anywhere in upper Pinellas County (Ulmerton Rd. to Palm Harbor). I prefer a balanced mix of roll and role-playing. Please, no power games (I've seen some 7th level fighter PCs routinely do more damage than a bullet in a single round), Monty Haul games, or Killer DMs (try playing a 2nd level PC in the RAVENLOFT module *Touch of Death*). Please contact: Bret Coffman at 813-796-0347.

ATTENTION ALL CITY WATCH MEMBERS: I, Justin Kordt, would like to ask all members of the city watch to contact me at Justin Kordt, % Dennis Everett, P.O. Box 5297, Maryville, TN 37902-5297 or e-mail to DenRayEver@aol.com. If I have not contacted you already please send a copy of your certificate with any supporting information.

PENNSYLVANIA: I'm looking to form a gaming group in the Bridgeville (10 minutes from Pittsburgh) area and vicinity to play in the AD&D, DRAGONLANCE®, FORGOTTEN REALMS, and RAVENLOFT worlds. Novice or experienced, male or female, all welcome. Please contact Ed Wolf IV, 720 Bowerhill Rd., Bridgeville PA 15017-2406. Or call after 4 PM weekdays 412-221-3806.

NEW YORK: Attention members in Rochester, NY and the surrounding area. I need your help to form a network club and bring RPGA Network tournaments to our local conventions. Anyone interested in bringing network events to western New York please contact me. Greg Ferris, 79 Castle Rd., Rochester, NY, 14623. E-mail: G.FERRIS@GENIE.COM.

CALIFORNIA: I am a 16 year old male looking to join or start ad AD&D gaming group or other role-playing games. Looking for group in Mariposa/Merced/Oakhurst area. If interested contact: Daniel Cantarini, 5061 Cole Rd., Mariposa CA 95338.